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THE

COMPLETE WORKS

OF

EDWARD PAYSON, D. D.

MEMOIR,

SELECT THOUGHTS

AND

SERMONS

OF THE LATE

REV. EDWARD PAYSON, D. D.
PASTOR OF THE SECOND CHURCH IN PORTLAND.

BENE ORASSE EST BENE STUDUISSE.—LUTHER.

COMPILED BY
REV. ASA CUMMINGS,
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CONTENTS.

PAGE.

SERMON XLIX.

THE ORACLES OF GOD.

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.—ROMANS III. 1, 2. - - - - - - - - 11

SERMON L.

THE GOSPEL, GLAD TIDINGS.

The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.—1 TIMOTHY I. 11. - - - - - - - - - - - - 34

SERMON LI.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.—JOHN XX. 28. 49

SERMON LII.

TITLES OF CHRIST.

Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.—ISAIAH IX. 6, 7. - - - - - - - - - - - - - 62

SERMON LIII.

CHRIST'S JOY IN THE CHURCH BEFORE HIS INCARNATION.

Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.—PROVERBS VIII. 31. - - - - - - - - - 72

SERMON LIV.

CHRIST'S PRIESTLY OFFICE.

Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum; We have such an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in

the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.—HEBREWS VIII. 1—3. - - - - - - 81

SERMON LV.

CHRIST A MAN OF SORROWS.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.—ISAIAH LIII. 3—7. - - - 92

SERMON LVI.

CHRIST A KING.

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.—1 CORINTHIANS XV. 24, 25. - - - - - - 104

SERMON LVII.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.—ACTS I. 9—11. - - - - - - - - - - - 115

SERMON LVIII.

CHRIST'S VICTORY OVER SATAN.

When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.—LUKE XI. 21, 22. 124

SERMON LIX.

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR THE CHURCH.

Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.—EPHESIANS V. 25—27. 136

SERMON LX. PAGE.

CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR OF THE LOST.

The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.—LUKE XIX. 10. - - - - - - - - - - - - 148

SERMON LXI.

CHRIST, GOD'S BEST GIFT TO MAN.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.—2 CORINTHIANS IX. 15. 159

SERMON LXII.

MAN'S TREATMENT OF CHRIST.

Having yet therefore one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also, last unto them, saying, They will reverence my Son.—MARK XII. 6. - 170

SERMON LXIII.

AN ASSEMBLY CONVOKED AGAINST SINNERS.

And I set a great assembly against them.—NEHEMIAH V. 7. - - 180

SERMON LXIV.

WHY THE WICKED ARE SPARED FOR A SEASON.

For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.—GENESIS XV. 16. - 191

SERMON LXV.

LOVERS OF PLEASURE DESCRIBED AND WARNED.

Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.—2 TIMOTHY III. 4. - 202

SERMON LXVI.

THE SINNER'S MISTAKES EXPOSED AND REPROVED.

These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.—PSALM L. 21, 22. - 214

SERMON LXVII.

THE SLEEPER AWAKENED.

What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God; if so be God will think upon us, that we perish not.—JONAH I. 6. - - - - 224

SERMON LXVIII.

JOY IN HEAVEN OVER REPENTING SINNERS.

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.—LUKE XV. 10. - - - - - - - - - - 235

SERMON LXIX.

THE OPPRESSED SOUL SEEKING DIVINE INTERPOSITION.

O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me.—ISAIAH XXXVIII. 14. - 253

SERMON LXX.

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH THE SON. PAGE.

Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.—1 JOHN I. 3. - - - - - - - - - - - 265

SERMON LXXI.

THE BLAMELESS PAIR.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.—LUKE I. 6. - - - - 280

SERMON LXXII.

CHILDREN TO BE EDUCATED FOR GOD.

Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.—EXODUS II. 9. - - - - - - - - - - - - 294

SERMON LXXIII.

HOW LITTLE CHILDREN ARE PREVENTED FROM COMING TO CHRIST.

But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.—MARK X. 14. - - - - - - - - - 309

SERMON LXXIV.

THE CHILDREN OF THE COVENANT, THE SAVIOUR'S FIRST CARE.

Ye are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.—ACTS III. 25, 26. - - - - - - - - - - 329

SERMON LXXV.

DUTY OF THE PRESENT TO THE COMING GENERATION.

One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.—PSALM CXLV. 1. - - - - - - - - - - 337

SERMON LXXVI.

ANGUISH OF PARENTS AT THE PERVERSENESS OF CHILDREN.

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!—2 SAMUEL XVIII. 33. - - - - - - - - - - 352

SERMON LXXVII.

THE GUILT AND CONSEQUENCES OF PARENTAL UNFAITHFULNESS.

For I have told him, that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever.—1 SAMUEL III. 13, 14. - - - - - - - - - - 362

SERMON LXXVIII. PAGE.

THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS VISITED UPON THEIR CHILDREN.

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation.—EXODUS XXXIV. 7. 375

SERMON LXXIX.

AN EARLY INTEREST IN GOD'S MERCY ESSENTIAL TO A HAPPY LIFE.

O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.—PSALM XC. 14. - - - - - - - - - - - 384

SERMON LXXX

SIN AVOIDED BY CONSIDERATIONS OF GOD.

How can I — sin against God?— GENESIS XXXIX. 9. - - - - - 395

SERMON LXXXI.

SOLOMON'S CHOICE.

And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.— 1 KINGS III. 10. - - - - - - - - - - - - - 405

SERMON LXXXII.

CHARACTER AFFECTED BY INTERCOURSE.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.—PROVERBS XIII. 20. - - - - - - - 416

SERMON LXXXIII.

CHARACTER OF DANIEL.

O Daniel, a man greatly beloved.— DANIEL X. 11. - - - - - 428

SERMON LXXXIV

OUR OBLIGATIONS TO GOD AND MEN.

Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's; and to God, the things that are God's.— MARK XII. 17. - - - - - - - - - - 440

SERMON LXXXV.

PARTICIPATION IN OTHER MEN'S SINS.

Neither be partaker of other men's sins.— 1 TIMOTHY V. 22. - - 450

SERMON LXXXVI.

PRAYER FOR RULERS.

I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.— 1 TIMOTHY II. 1, 2. - - - - - - - - - - 462

SERMON LXXXVII.

LOVE TO CHRIST INDISPENSABLE.

Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.— JOHN XXI. 15. - - - - - 471

SERMON LXXXVIII.

THE CHARACTERS WHOM CHRIST LOVES. PAGE.
I love them that love me.—PROVERBS VIII. 17. - - - - - 480

SERMON LXXXIX.

THE SAFETY OF RELIGION.
He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.—PROVERBS X. 9. - - 493

SERMON XC.

A DISSUASIVE FROM AMBITION.
Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not; for behold I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord; but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey.—JEREMIAH XLV. 5. - - - - - - - - - - 503

SERMON XCI.

CHRIST'S MISSION AND RETURN.
I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.—JOHN XVI. 28. - - - - 517

SERMON XCII.

HOLINESS TO THE LORD.
In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them and seethe therein; and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts.—ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21. - - - - 529

SERMON XCIII

THE GLORY WHICH IS DUE TO JEHOVAH.
Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come before him; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.—1 CHRONICLES XVI. 28, 29. - - - - - - - - - 539

SERMON XCIV.

GOD'S PRAISES SUNG; HIS WORKS FORGOTTEN.
They sang his praise; they soon forgat his works.—PSALM CVI. 12, 13. 553

SERMON XCV.

THE CONDITION OF MEN WITHOUT THE BIBLE.
If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.—1 CORINTHIANS XV. 16—18. - 569

SERMON XCVI.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT.
For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.—2 CORINTHIANS V. 10. - - - 581

SERMON XLIX.

THE ORACLES OF GOD.

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.—Romans iii. 1, 2. *

With the history of God's ancient people, of his gracious interpositions in their favor, and of the distinguished blessings which he conferred on them; this assembly are, it is presumed, familiarly acquainted. None who are thus acquainted with it need be informed, that the works which he wrought for this highly favored nation were, emphatically, great. They were even so in his estimation; for he frequently speaks of them as demanding and displaying, a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm. In the performance of these works, most of the established laws of nature were repeatedly suspended or counteracted; and miracles became events of daily occurrence. Rocks poured out water, and waters were turned to blood; the clouds rained bread, and the winds brought flesh; rivers and seas divided, and the earth opened; the regular succession of day and night was, in a part of the world at least, interrupted, and The sun and the moon stood still in their habitations. Important

* Delivered in Boston, Jan. 21, 1824, before the Marine Bible Society of that city and its vicinity.

changes, changes the consequences of which are still extensively felt, were also effected in the political world. A powerful nation was nearly destroyed by an unexampled series of miraculous judgments; seven other nations were exterminated, or driven from their territories; and a new nation, of a peculiar character, was formed, and planted in their room. Nor was this all. Events of a far more extraordinary nature, and of incomparably deeper, and more awful interest than any which have yet been mentioned, occurred. Angels descended from their celestial abodes; disclosed themselves to the eyes, addressed themselves to the ears, and interposed, visibly, in the affairs of mortals: and even Jehovah Himself, coming forth from that unapproachable light which he inhabits, visited and dwelt among men in a manner cognizable by their senses; went before his favored people in a pillar of cloud and fire; conversed face to face with an individual of our species, As a man talketh with his friend; and on Sinai, displayed his presence, his perfections, and his supreme legislative authority, with such attending circumstances of grandeur and terror, as will never again be witnessed on earth, till the day of final retribution shall arrive.

Now why was all this done? The all-wise God who does nothing in vain, and who never acts without an adequate motive, must, surely, have designed to effect some most important object, by these unparalleled works of wonder and power; of condescension and love. He did so; and he has informed us what it was. He had set his love upon this favored nation; he had chosen them to be his own peculiar people; and he had promised, with an oath, to bestow on them distinguishing blessings. To glorify himself, by displaying his power, his faithfulness, and the riches of his goodness in the fulfilment of this promise, was, as he repeatedly declared, the object which he had in view while performing these works.

And what were these promised blessings; the bestowal of which demanded and justified such a profusion of miracles; such extraordinary interpositions and manifestations of Divinity? That they must have been great indeed, cannot be doubted. A brief enumeration of them will show that they were so. They included, the deliverance of the nation from Egyptian bondage; their settlement in a land flowing with milk and honey; the formation of a national covenant between them and their God;

and the establishment of his worship, and of the true religion among them, while all other nations were enslaved by the grossest ignorance, superstition, and idolatry. Such advantages had the Jew; such were the blessings connected with circumcision. We have not yet, however, enumerated them all. The apostle informs us in our text, that the chief blessings enjoyed by his countrymen, consisted in their possession of the Sacred Scriptures; here styled, the oracles of God. It must be recollected, that in making this assertion, he expressed, not his own sentiments merely, but, the mind of the Spirit, by whom he was inspired. We are, therefore, to regard this passage, as containing the testimony of the Spirit of God, that is, of God himself, to the value of the Scriptures. We learn from it, that he viewed them as the most valuable gift which he had bestowed upon the Jews; and their possession as constituting the principal advantage, enjoyed by them above other nations. Now consider a moment, my hearers, how much this implies. You have heard a brief statement, a statement which, you are sensible, falls far below the truth, of the wonderful works which God wrought for this people. You have heard that his design in performing these works was, to glorify himself, by bestowing on them corresponding blessings. And now it appears, that of all the blessings thus bestowed; blessings, in conferring which God designed to make a grand exhibition of his perfections, and display the riches of his goodness to a favored people, the scriptures were, in his estimation, the greatest; greater than their deliverance from the most cruel bondage; greater than the possession of the promised land; greater than all their civil and political privileges; greater, even, than all their other religious advantages. The passage before us, then, taken in connection with the facts which have been mentioned, evidently teaches that, in the judgment of God, the Scriptures are one of the most valuable gifts which he can bestow; one of the richest blessings which men can possess. It is scarcely necessary to add, that, if they are so in his judgment, they are so in reality; since his judgment is ever according to truth. And if they are really thus valuable, we ought thus to value them. If they held the first place among the gifts, which God bestowed on his ancient chosen people, they certainly ought to hold the same place in our estimation, among the gifts which his Providence

has bestowed on us. We ought to prize them above our temporal possessions, our liberties, our civil and literary privileges; and to regard their extensive dissemination among us as the richest blessing, which is enjoyed by this highly favored land.

To the truth of the preceding remarks and conclusions, many of my hearers will, I doubt not, yield a ready and cordial assent. Some, however, may feel disposed to ask, why does God, and why should we, value the Scriptures less highly? To this question an answer may be found in the title, by which the Scriptures are here designated. They are styled, The Oracles of God. That we may perceive the full import of this title as used by the apostle, and understand what a volume of meaning it conveyed to the minds of his Gentile converts, we must turn our attention for a moment to the heathen oracles; so frequently mentioned, and so highly extolled, by the historians and poets of pagan antiquity. In their writings, the word here rendered, oracles, is used to denote the answers, given, or supposed to be given, by their gods, to those who consulted them according to a prescribed form. By a common figure of speech, the word, oracle, was afterwards applied to the temples or shrines where such answers were given. Whether, as is now generally supposed, these answers were forged by the priests, or whether, as some have contended, they were the results of diabolical agency, it is not necessary to inquire. Suffice it for our present purpose to remark, that though proverbially ambiguous and obscure, they were regarded with the most profound veneration, and relied upon with the fullest confidence, by a very large proportion of the heathen world. No enterprise of importance was undertaken without consulting the oracles; splendid embassies, with magnificent presents, were sent from far distant states and monarchs for this purpose; the most costly sacrifices were offered, with a view to obtain a propitious answer; and, in more than one instance, contending nations submitted to them the decision of their respective claims.

With these facts the Gentile converts to Christianity were well acquainted: in these opinions and feelings of their countrymen, they had, previously to their conversion, participated. From their earliest years they had been taught, not only by precept, but by the far more impressive lessons of example, to

venerate the oracles; to rely upon them as infallible guides; and to consider them as a tribunal, from whose decisions there was no appeal. The effects of these prejudices and feelings, thus early imbibed, thus deeply rooted, thus wrought as it were into the very texture of their minds, could not be wholly and at once obliterated, by their subsequent conversion to Christianity. The word, oracles, could scarcely fail to excite in them some of the ideas and emotions, with which it had been so long, and so intimately associated. It must still have retained, in their ears, a venerable and sacred sound. No title, then, could be better adapted to inspire them with veneration for the Scriptures, than that which is here employed by the apostle. It probably appeared to them, far more impressive and full of meaning, than it does to us.

Nor would it appear less sacred, or less full of important meaning to the Jew. In their minds this title would be associated with their once venerated Urim and Thummim: and with those responses which Jehovah gave to their fathers by an audible voice, from the inner sanctuary, where he had formerly dwelt, or manifested his presence, in a peculiar and sensible manner. In our version of the Scriptures, this place is frequently styled The Oracle; and it was the only place which ever really deserved the name. The answers which God there gave to the inquiries of his worshippers, were full, explicit, and definite; forming, in all respects, a perfect contrast, to the ambiguous and delusive oracles of Paganism.

These remarks will assist in ascertaining the ideas, which the apostle's language was suited to convey, and which we may, therefore, presume he intended it should convey, to the minds of his contemporary readers. By employing this language, he did in effect say to the Gentile converts, All that you once supposed the oracles of your countrymen to be, the Scriptures really are. They are the true and living oracles, of the only living and true God. With at least equal force and clearness did his language say to the Jews, The scriptures are no less the word of God, and no less entitled to veneration and confidence, than were the answers which he formerly gave to your fathers, by audible voice from the mercy seat. It can scarcely be necessary to add, that, though the apostle here refers to the Old Testament only, his expressions are equally applicable to the

New; for the same God, who in the former spake by the prophets, has in the latter spoken by his Son; and by apostles, whom His Son commissioned, and His Spirit inspired. The New Testament is, therefore, no less than the Old, an oracle. Both united now compose, The Oracles of God.

That this title is given to the Scriptures with perfect truth and propriety, no one who acknowledges their divine inspiration will, it is presumed, deny. They do not indeed, and it is one of their chief excellences that they do not, resemble in all respects the heathen oracles. They neither answer, nor profess to answer, such questions, as were usually proposed to them. They inform no man what will be the duration of his life, nor by what means it will be terminated. They will not predict to us the result of any particular private, or public enterprize. They will not aid the politician in devising, nor the soldier in executing schemes for the subjugation of his fellow creatures. They were never designed to gratify a vain curiosity; much less to subserve the purposes of ambition or avarice, and this is, probably, one reason why many persons never consult them. But though they give no answers to such questions as these passions suggest, they answer questions incomparably more important, and communicate information infinitely more valuable. If they inform no man when or how his life will be terminated, they inform every man who rightly consults them, how both its progress, and its termination may be rendered happy. If they inform no man how he may prolong his existence in this world, they will inform every man how he may secure everlasting life in the world to come. If they give no information respecting the result of any particular enterprise, they will teach us how to conduct all our enterprises in such a manner, that the final result shall be glory, and honor, and immortality. And while they inform individuals how they may obtain endless felicity, they will teach nations how to secure national prosperity. In fine, whatever a man's situation and circumstances may be, whatever offices or relations he may sustain; this oracle, if consulted in the manner in which God has prescribed, will satisfactorily answer every question, which it is proper for him to ask; every question, an answer to which is necessary either to his present, or future well being; for it contains all the information, which our most wise and benevolent Creator sees it best

that his human creatures should, at present, possess. Indeed we have reason to believe, that should he now condescend to visit and converse with us in a visible form, he would answer all our inquiries by referring us to the Scriptures; for when our Saviour, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, resided on earth, he pursued this course with respect to such questions, as had been already answered in the Old Testament. To such as proposed any of those questions his usual answer was, What saith the scripture? What is written in the law? How readest thou? And if he pursued this course while the Scriptures contained the Old Testament only, we may presume that he would now pursue it exclusively; since the revelation, which God designed for men, is completed by the addition of the New. In possessing the Scriptures, then, our country possesses every real advantage, that would result from the establishment of an oracle among us, where God should give answers to his worshippers by an audible voice, as he formerly did to the Jews. Indeed we possess advantages, in some respects far greater than would result from such an establishment; for wherever the oracle might be placed, it would unavoidably be at a distance from a large proportion of those who wished for its advice; to consult it, a long and expensive journey would often be necessary; and, in many cases of frequent occurrence, an answer, thus obtained, would come too late. But in the Scriptures we possess an oracle, which may be brought home to every family, and every individual; which may be placed in our habitations, in our closets, and consulted daily or hourly, without fatigue, expense or delay; nay more which may be made the companion of the traveller on his journey, and of the mariner on his voyage. In this oracle we possess all, and much more than all, that was possessed by the ancient church in its Urim and Thummin, its ephod, and its sanctuary. By placing it in our closets, and consulting it aright, we may make them to us, all that the Holy of Holies was to the pious Jew; a place where God will meet us, converse with us, answer our inquiries, and accept our offerings. In fine, we have in this oracle, the very mind and heart of our Creator. The thoughts and purposes of his mind, and the emotions of his heart, lie here in silence, waiting an opportunity to make themselves known. Hence, whenever we open the Scriptures, we do

in effect, open the lips of Jehovah, and the words of Eternal Truth burst at once upon our ears; the counsels of unerring wisdom address our understandings and our hearts. It is true, that, owing to various causes which we shall presently notice, many, who have the oracles of God in their hands, are by no means aware of these facts. God speaketh once, yea twice; but man perceiveth it not.

It is also true, that in consequence of having been familiar from our childhood with much of the information which these oracles impart, we are generally far from being sensible, how deeply we are indebted to them, how great is their value, and how deplorable our situation would be rendered by their loss. If we would form just conceptions of these several particulars, we must place ourselves, for a moment, in the situation of a serious, reflecting, inquirer after truth, who has reached the meridian of life, without any knowledge of the Scriptures. Let us suppose such a man to have diligently studied himself, his fellow creatures, and the world around him; and to have made use of all the assistance, which heathen philosophy can afford. Let us suppose, that he has pursued his inquiries as far as unassisted human intellect can go; and that he now finds himself bewildered in a maze of conflicting theories and enveloped by all that distracting uncertainty, perplexity, and anxiety, into which the researches of men unenlightened by revelation, inevitably plunge them. To such a man what would the Scriptures be worth? What would he give for a single hour's opportunity of consulting an oracle, which should return such answers to his inquiries as they contain? Would you rightly estimate the information which he might derive from such an oracle during that short period? See him, then, approach it, and listen while he consults it. Perplexed by the numberless questions which impatiently demand a solution, and agitated by an undefinable awe of the invisible, mysterious being whom he is about to address, he scarcely knows how, or where, to commence his inquiries. At length he hesitatingly and tremblingly asks, "To whom are the heavens above me, the world which I inhabit, and the various objects with which it is filled, indebted for their existence?" A mild, but majestic voice replies from the oracle, In the beginning, God created the heavens, and the earth, and all that is therein. Startled by the scarcely expected

answer, but soon recovering his self possession, the inquirer eagerly exclaims, "Who is God—what is his nature—his character—his attributes?" God, replies the voice, is a Spirit: He is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning of days, or end of years; and with him is no variableness, nor shadow of turning; He fills heaven and earth; He searches the hearts, and tries the reins of the children of men; He is the only Wise, the Almighty, the High, and Holy, and Just, One; He is Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; but one who will by no means clear the guilty. A solemn pause ensues. The inquirer's mind is overwhelmed. It labors, it sinks, it faints, while vainly attempting to grasp the illimitable, incomprehensible Being, now, for the first time, disclosed to its view. But a new, and more powerful motive now stimulates his inquiries, and, with augmented interest, he asks, "Does any relation or connexion subsist between this God and myself?" He is thy Maker, returns the oracle, the Father of thy spirit, and thy Preserver; He it is who giveth thee richly all things to enjoy; He is thy Sovereign, thy Lawgiver, and thy Judge; in Him thou dost live, and move, and exist, nor can any one deliver thee out of his hands; and when, at death, thy dust shall return to the earth as it was, thy spirit will return to God who gave it. "How," resumes the inquirer, "will he then receive me?" He will reward thee according to thy works. "What are the works," the inquirer asks, "which this Sovereign requires of me?" Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. Every transgression of this law is a sin; and the soul that sinneth shall die. "Have I sinned?" the inquirer tremblingly asks. All, replies the oracle, have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. The God, in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified." A new sensation, the sensation of conscious guilt, now oppresses the inquirer, and with increased anxiety he asks, "Is there any way in which the pardon of sin may be obtained?" The blood of Jesus Christ, replies the oracle, cleanseth from all sin. He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy. "But to whom shall I

confess them?" the inquirer resumes; "where shall I find the God whom I have offended, that I may acknowledge my transgressions, and implore his mercy?" He is a God at hand, returns the voice; He is not far from thee; I, who speak to thee, am he. "God be merciful to me a sinner," exclaims the inquirer, smiting upon his breast, and not daring to lift his eyes towards the oracle: "What, Lord, wilt thou have me to do?" Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, answers the voice, and thou shalt be saved. "Lord, who is Jesus Christ? that I may believe on him?" He is my beloved Son, whom I have set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; Hear thou him, for there is salvation in no other. Such are, probably, some of the questions which would be asked by the supposed inquirer; and such are, in substance, the answers which he would receive from the oracles of God. That these answers contain but a small part of the information, which may be drawn from them, it is needless to remind you. Yet of this small part only, who can compute the value? Who can say what it would be worth, to one who should rightly improve it? To beings situated as we are,—to immortal, accountable, sinful creatures, hastening to eternity, to the tribunal of a justly offended God; what is wealth, what is liberty, what is life itself, compared with such information as this? compared with instructions, which make them wise unto salvation? compared with that knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ, which is eternal life?

To these remarks it may, perhaps, be replied, that, though to a man who had never seen the Scriptures, they might serve, in some respects, as an oracle, and even prove a gift of inestimable value, yet to us, and to others, who have long been familiar with their contents, they can answer no such purpose, and must, therefore, be of far inferior worth. Why, it may be asked, should we consult them as an oracle, when we are already acquainted with the answers which they will return? But has the man who asks this, or has any man that ever existed, drawn from the Scriptures all the information which they contain? He who asserts, or supposes that he has done it, proves only that he needs to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God; for they assert that, If any man thinketh he knoweth any thing, if he supposes himself to have acquired sufficient knowledge of

ny religious subject, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to :now. It may reasonably be doubted whether any one present would have discovered that the declaration of Jehovah, I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, furnishes a conclusive proof of the existence of the human soul, during the period which elapses between death and the resurrection, had not our Saviour pointed it out to us. And how many times might we have read the declaration, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedec, before we should have suspected, that it involves all those important consequences, which St. Paul deduces from it in his epistle to the Hebrews? These instances render it reasonable to suppose, that many other passages contain proofs and illustrations of important truths, which have never been noticed; and which yet remain, to reward the researches of future inquirers. However this may be, it is certain, that he who but seldom consults the oracles of God, he who does not habitually repair to them as his counsellor and guide, will receive from them no satisfactory answers. He only, whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates therein day and night, will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth its fruit in season.

It may further be remarked in reply to the objection before us, that many of the terms in which the oracles of God are expressed, contain a fullness, a depth, or rather an infinity of meaning, which no created mind can ever fully comprehend. What finite mind, either human or angelic, ever fully comprehended, or ever will fully comprehend, all that is contained in the names assumed by Jehovah, in the titles given to Jesus Christ, or in the words, eternity, heaven, hell, everlasting punishment, everlasting life? Now he who most frequently consults the oracles of God, in the manner prescribed by their author, will penetrate most deeply into the unfathomable abyss of meaning, which these and other terms of a kindred nature, contain. He may, indeed, receive the same answers to his inquiries, which he had received on former occasions; but these answers will convey to his mind, clearer and more enlarged conceptions of the truths which they reveal. His views will resemble those of an astronomer, who is, from time to time, furnished with telescopes of greater power. Or, to vary the figure, what at first seemed only an indistinct shadow, will become a vivid picture, and the

picture will, at length, stand out in bold relief. In fine, he will know more and more of those subjects, which, to use the language of an apostle, pass knowledge; and will enjoy, in a corresponding degree, all the benefits which the Scriptures are designed and adapted to impart. These remarks may be elucidated by a familiar illustration. The lisping child, and the most profound astronomer, uses the word, sun, to denote the same object. The child, however, means by this word, nothing more than a round, luminous body, of a few inches in diameter. But it would require a volume, to contain all the interesting and sublime conceptions, of which this word stands for the sign, or with which it is associated, in the mind of the astronomer. So different individuals may employ the same scriptural terms and phrases; and they may employ them to denote the same objects. Yet wide, almost immeasurably wide, may be the difference between the ideas, which these terms convey to their minds, or which they employ them to express. One man may see little, or perhaps, no meaning, in an expression, which shall fill the mind of another even to overflowing, with the fulness of God.

It may, perhaps, be farther objected to the views which have now been given of the Scriptures, that, as they do not speak in an audible voice, their answers to our inquiries can never possess that life, that energy, that character of deep, impressive solemnity, which attend the responses of a living oracle, such as was formerly established among the Jews. An epithet which is applied to the Scriptures by another inspired writer will assist in obviating this objection. He styles them the lively or living oracles. In perfect conformity with this language an apostle declares that, the word of God is alive and powerful. And another apostle asserts, not only that it is alive, but that it imparts life. Ye are born again, he says to believers, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible; even by the word of God, which liveth, and abideth forever. Now what do these assertions mean? They doubtless mean something, for inspired writers make no unmeaning assertions. What they mean we may, perhaps, learn from our Saviour's language, The words that I speak unto you, are spirit, and they are life. They were so when he uttered them; they are so still. And they are life because they are spirit; because the Living Spirit of the Living

God does, as it were, live in them, and employ their instrumentality in imparting life to all, who consult them in the manner which he has prescribed. Take away his accompanying influences, and the living oracles become, in the emphatic language of an apostle, "a dead letter." But he who consults them aright, does not find them a dead letter. He finds no reason to complain, that they do not address him with all the force and vivacity of a living speaker. On the contrary he finds, that the living, life giving Spirit, by whom they were inspired, and who still lives and speaks in every line, carries home their words to his understanding, his conscience, and his heart, with an enlightening, vivifying energy, which no tongue of man, or angel, could ever impart to language. The voice of God himself, bursting in thunder from heaven, could scarcely speak in accents more powerful, commanding, and impressive. Is this language too strong? What then means the interrogation of Jehovah? Is not my word like a fire, and like a hammer, which breaketh the rock in pieces? Indeed it is. It has been the instrument of breaking all the flinty hearts that ever were broken; and every heart which it breaks, it heals again. Yes, The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. And what more can be expected of any oracle, what can man wish that any oracle should do more, than effect the illumination of his understanding, the conversion of his soul, the communication of wisdom to his mind, and of joy to his heart?

It is, however, readily acknowledged that thousands, who possess and peruse the Scriptures, derive none of these benefits from their perusal, and receive from them no satisfactory answers. But the reason is obvious. They do not consult them in the manner which God has prescribed. They do not consult them, as an oracle of God ever ought to be consulted. They do not, for instance, consult them with becoming reverence. They do not feel, when opening the sacred volume, that the mouth of God is about to open, and address them. They do not feel as they will acknowledge an Israelite ought to have felt, when approaching the Holy of Holies, to ask counsel of his Maker. On the contrary, they peruse the Scriptures with little

more reverence, than the works of a human author. They consult them, as they would consult a dictionary or an almanac. Indeed we are all, in this respect, criminally deficient. Permit me here to make a direct, but respectful and affectionate appeal to the consciences of my audience, and ask, had you seen an Israelite approach, and address the oracle of Jehovah, in the same manner, and with the same feelings, with which you have too often perused the Scriptures, would you not have expected to see him, instead of receiving a gracious answer, struck dead by a flash of that fire which consumed Nadab and Abihu, the irreverent sons of Aaron? My hearers, if we would consult the oracles of God in a manner acceptable to him, and beneficial, or even safe, to ourselves, we must practically remember the declaration which he made on that awful occasion; I will be sanctified in all that approach me; and the language of our hearts, when opening the sacred volume, must be, I will now hear what the Lord my God shall say; speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

Nor is sincerity less necessary than reverence to one, who would rightly consult the oracles of God. By sincerity is meant a real desire to know our duty, with a full determination to believe and obey the answers we shall receive; however contrary they may be to our natural inclinations, our favorite pursuits, or our preconceived opinions. How useless, how much worse than useless, it is to consult these oracles without such a disposition, we may learn from a divine declaration, recorded in the book of Ezekiel. Some of the elders of Israel, it appears, visited the prophet, professedly with a view to inquire of the Lord. But the only answer which they obtained was this; Are ye come to inquire of me; As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you. He also informs us what were the reasons of this determination. These men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face; and should I be at all inquired of by them? He then proceeds to declare, that if any man, of any nation, shall presume to consult him with idols in his heart, he will set his face against that man, and answer him according to the multitude of his idols. My hearers, if we consult the oracles of God with a view to draw from them an answer, which shall gratify our sinful inclinations, or justify our questionable pur-

suits and practices, or support our favorite prejudices, we do, in effect, come to inquire of the Lord with idols in our hearts, and can expect nothing but a corresponding answer. The same remark is applicable to every one, who consults the Scriptures, while he neglects known duties, or disobeys known commands. Such a man has idols in his heart; idols which he prefers to Jehovah; and why should he be favored with any further answers, while he disregards those which he has already received? We may see these remarks exemplified in the history of Saul. He had been guilty, he was still guilty, of known disobedience; and therefore, when he inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not. To a similar cause, the ill success of many, who now consult the Scriptures, without deriving from them any advantage, is, doubtless, to be ascribed.

There are others whose want of success in consulting the oracles of God is owing to their unbelief. As no food can nourish those, who do not partake of it; as no medicines can prove salutary to those, who refuse to make use of them; so no oracles can be serviceable to those, by whom they are not believed with a cordial, practical, operative faith. It must ever be remembered that though the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, it is only through faith in Christ Jesus. To those, in whom this faith does not exist, wisdom is not imparted.

Finally, many persons derive no benefit from the oracles of God, because they attempt to consult them without prayer. But without prayer, though they may be read, they cannot, properly speaking, be consulted. Consulting an oracle is an act, which, in its very nature, implies an acknowledgment of ignorance, and a petition for guidance, for instruction. It is the act of a blind man, extending his hand to an unseen guide, and requesting his assistance. He, then, who reads the Scriptures without prayer, does not really consult them; does not treat them as an oracle; and, therefore, shall not find them such. It is to him, who first humbly speaks to God, that God will condescend to speak. It is to him, who, with the temper of a little child, and with a heart which receives the truth in the love of it, consults the oracle upon his knees, and prays over every response, that God will unlock all his hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He who, in this manner, daily consults it, shall be

guided as safely, as an all-wise God can guide him; and conducted to heaven as certainly, as there is a heaven; for if he who walketh with wise men shall be wise, how much more shall he who walketh with God? Whatever else we neglect, then, let us not neglect the Scriptures. Whatever else we consult, let us not fail to consult the oracles of God. Should we be guilty of this negligence, the queen of the South will rise up in the judgment, and condemn us; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; but wisdom, infinitely greater than that of Solomon, is here. Nay, the heathen will rise up, and condemn us; for they spared no labor or expense in consulting their worthless oracles; but we have the living oracles of the living God in our hands, and may at all times consult them, without expense, and without fatigue. Who, then, will be so much his own enemy as to neglect them? When the Infinite, the Allwise, the Almighty God, stooping from his eternal throne in the heavens, condescends to address us as a father; to place before us a transcript of his mind and his heart; to converse with us familiarly, as a man talketh with his friend; to narrate the history of his past works, and of past ages; and to reveal to us future scenes, and events; and when the information thus communicated, involves the fate of the world which we inhabit, our own eternal destiny, and that of our fellow creatures; who can be so insensible, so sottish, so impious, as to refuse attention! Whosoever hath ears to hear, let him hear. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Jehovah! Listen, O listen, when thy Maker speaks.

But to consult the oracles of God is not the only duty imposed by their possession. Another duty, which we are no less sacredly bound to perform, is to place them, so far as we have ability and opportunity, in the hands of our destitute fellow creatures. An opportunity of performing this duty is now presented you. The object of the Society, at whose instance we are assembled, is, to furnish a numerous, valuable, and too long neglected class of our fellow citizens, with the sacred oracles; and to persuade them, if possible, to consult these oracles in such a manner, as shall insure their present moral and religious improvement, and their final salvation. In the prosecution of this object, the Society need, and request, your countenance, your aid; and they will not, we trust, request it in vain. By granting it, you may

place in the hands of a fellow immortal, at once, all the truth, which the Father of Lights was employed, for many ages, in communicating to mankind. You may confer on him, at a very trifling expense, those sacred oracles, which, at the expense of numberless miracles, God conferred on his chosen, favored people, as the most valuable gift which his providential hand could bestow. You may confer a blessing more valuable than wealth, than liberty, than life itself. All your other possessions, without the Bible, would be a gift, incomparably less precious than the Bible alone. By conferring this gift on mariners, we shall assist in discharging a debt of no trifling magnitude, which has already remained too long unpaid. To mariners we are indebted, under God, for a considerable portion of those very oracles, with which we are now requested to furnish mariners. That several of the writers of the New Testament, and a still greater number of the apostles, belonged to this class of society, you need not be informed. We are, also, deeply indebted to them in a temporal view. They have long acted a humble, indeed, but a most important part, in extending the boundaries of human knowledge, in aiding the progress and diffusing the blessings, of civilization, and thus promoting the general interests of mankind. To them our country is indebted for its discovery, and its settlement. To them this city, in common with all other commercial cities, is indebted for its prosperity. Their direct, or indirect agency has erected, decorated, and furnished your houses, replenished your stores, and increased your wealth and population to their present extent. Take away seamen, and where is commerce? Take away commerce, and where is the prosperity of this city? They are the hands which she extends to the east, and to the west, to grasp, and bring home to her bosom, the rich fruits of widely distant climes. To them we are all indebted for the various foreign productions, which compose so large a part of the conveniences, and even necessaries, of civilised life. You can visit no town, you can scarcely find a cottage, in our country, to the support and comfort of whose inhabitants, mariners have not contributed.

It must not be forgotten that, in procuring for us these advantages, our seamen have placed at hazard, not only their lives, but their eternal interests. Of this fact, as well as of our obligations to this neglected part of the community, most of us

have, probably, thought too little, and too lightly. While enjoying, at our ease, the fruits of their perils and labors, we have too often failed to recollect, that the men who procured for us these enjoyments, did it at the expense, of cutting themselves off from most of the comforts of civilized, social, and domestic life; depriving themselves, in a great measure, of the religious institutions and privileges with which their countrymen are favored; throwing themselves into the midst of snares and temptations, and jeoparding all that is valuable, all that ought to be dear, to an immortal, accountable being, advancing to meet the retributions of eternity. We have not sufficiently adverted to the obvious fact, that the mariner, while pursuing the voyage of life, is almost inevitably exposed to rocks, whirlpools, and quicksands, incomparably more dangerous, and more difficult to shun, than any which he is called to encounter in navigating the deep. A very little reflection will convince us, that, while he continues to be exposed to these dangers without any safeguard, foreign productions must be obtained at an expense, infinitely transcending their value; an expense which no finite mind can estimate, and which no benevolent mind can contemplate but with horror. Did we view this subject in the light of revelation, and feel in view of it as we ought; it may well be doubted, whether we could enjoy the productions thus obtained, or even consent to make use of them. When David thirsted for water from the well of Bethlehem, whence he had often drawn refreshment in his youthful days, and some of his soldiers, at the hazard of their lives, broke through an opposing army to procure for him a cup of this much desired water, he refused to drink of it, but poured it out before the Lord, exclaiming, Be it far from me that I should do this; is it not the blood of the men, who went in jeopardy of their lives! He felt that water, thus obtained, was too precious for a mortal's lips: too precious for any other use, than that of being offered to the Lord of life. And who will deny, that this was the language, that these were the genuine feelings, of a noble, benevolent, pious mind? Yet how often do we forget to exercise similar feelings, in similar circumstances? How often do we, without reflection, eat, and drink, and wear, the price of blood, the blood of the soul! How deeply dyed with this blood are foreign productions, before they reach our hands! How many of our fel-

low immortals have sunk, not in the ocean merely, but in the gulf of perdition, that we might be gratified with the fruits of other climes! My hearers, were there no other remedy for these tremendous evils, were they necessarily and inseparably connected with commerce, every one who possesses a particle of that spirit by which David was then animated, or of that concern for immortal beings which glowed in the bosom of the Son of David, would say, that commerce ought to be at once, and forever, abandoned. Every one who has the feelings, I will not say of a Christian, but of a man, would exclaim, "Better, infinitely better, that we should be confined to the productions of our own soil, than that so many of our fellow creatures, our countrymen, should be exposed to such imminent danger of moral and eternal ruin!" But we are not reduced to this alternative. A remedy for the moral evils to which our mariners are exposed is already provided, and may easily be applied. Let them all be furnished with the oracles of God. Let those by whom they are employed, whose advice they will, probably, respect, say something to them of the value of these oracles, and of the infinite importance of consulting them aright. Let measures be taken for enabling them to enjoy the full benefit of our religious institutions, during the short periods of their residence on shore. In a word, let them be convinced, that we regard them as immortal, accountable creatures; that we feel a deep solicitude for their present and future happiness; that we are willing to do all in our power to secure it; and that we believe it can be secured by no other means, than those which the Scriptures reveal. Is this requiring too much? I will not offer such an insult to the understandings and the hearts of this assembly, as to indulge a suspicion that they are disposed to reply, "It is." Some of the largest commercial cities in our own, and in other countries, have already practically said, "It is not requiring too much." The members of this Marine Bible Society, and many others among your fellow citizens, have, in the same manner, made a similar reply. They have made the most laudable exertions to meliorate the moral condition of your seamen, and to furnish them with an antidote to those evils to which they are peculiarly exposed; and nothing, but a more extensive and efficient co-operation on the part of those who employ them, is wanting to render these exertions successful.

And is it possible that, in an age like the present, and in a city like this, such a co-operation should continue to be wanting? Is it considered as important that no vessel should be sent to sea, without some medicinal provision for the health of its crew? and is it not, at least, equally important, that every vessel should be furnished with the remedy, which God has provided for the moral diseases, to which seamen are particularly exposed? Self-interest alone, were there no other motive, should prompt the careful performance of this duty; for these diseases, when suffered to become inveterate, prove, not only fatal to the subjects of them, but injurious to their employers. It is impossible to estimate, with any approach to accuracy, the losses which commercial men have sustained, in consequence of the negligence, the unfaithfulness, and the intemperance of those, to whom their property, while on the ocean, was necessarily entrusted; but no one, who has attended at all to the subject, can doubt, that these losses have been great. Nor will any unprejudiced person doubt, that many of them would have been prevented, had proper attention been always paid to the moral and religious improvement of seamen. There is, probably, no merchant, whatever his religious sentiments may be, who would not think his property more safe, in the care of such as revere and consult the oracles of God, than of those who do not possess, and, of course, cannot regard them.

Permit me to proceed a step farther, and inquire, whether that God, who so often constrains men to read their sins in their punishment, and employs the vices, which their negligence has fostered, to scourge them, may not have permitted the numerous and shocking piracies which have been recently perpetrated, with a view to chastise commercial nations, and rouse them from their criminal insensibility to the religious interests of seamen? What else could such nations expect, either from his justice, or from the manner in which they have long treated this neglected portion of the community? They commit the mariner to the ocean at an early age, before his character is formed, or his principles established. Inexperienced, unarmed, unprepared for the assault, he is there assailed by temptations, which it would require the full vigor of mature, and deeply rooted, virtuous principle to resist. Day after day, and year after year, the assault is continued, without intermission, and in almost every

conceivable variety of form; while no friendly hand is extended to aid, no cheering voice is employed to encourage him in maintaining the arduous conflict. Can we then wonder, that, sooner or later, he is overcome? And when he is once overcome, whence shall he derive any inducement, or encouragement, to resume the contest? He has, indeed, a conscience, and, for a time, it will speak. But though this monitor may reproach him for his fall, she cannot assist him to rise; she cannot even inform him where assistance may be obtained. The oracles of God would give him this information, but he has them not. Destitute of this guide, the reproaches of an accusing conscience serve only to torment him. They become too painful to be endured; how shall he silence them? There is one way, a terrible, a desperate way indeed, but he knows no other. Example points it out to him, and urges him to follow it; and he obeys. He flies to the intoxicating bowl, drowns his reason and his conscience together, and by degrees, become a beast, nay, an incarnate fiend. What is now to restrain him from crime, from piracy, from murder? What is to prevent the remainder of his wretched life from being spent in the perpetration of every outrage, which excites the abhorrence of earth, and the indignation of heaven? Suppose it, (the supposition is, alas! too often realized,) to be thus spent. Death, which comes to all, must at length come to him. It may come as the messenger of public justice; or it may come in the form of what we call a casualty, and hurry him to the bar of his offended God, in a fit of intoxication, or with a half uttered curse upon his lips. My hearers, this is no fiction. It is the real history of hundreds, probably of thousands; of many, too, who commence the voyage of life, with prospects no less bright, with hopes no less sanguine than your own. And who, that has the feelings of a man, can contemplate unmoved, ruin like this? ruin so complete, so terrible, so hopeless! My hearers, it is from such ruin, that we now implore you to assist in saving your fellow creatures, your countrymen. We entreat you to furnish them with that volume, which a most wise and merciful God has given to lost, bewildered, guilty man, for his oracle, his solace, and his guide. Say not, the gift will avail them nothing. Facts do not warrant this assertion. In proportion to the seed sown upon it, the ocean has yielded as rich a harvest as the land.

It would be easy to enlarge on this fruitful topic to a much greater extent. It would be easy to suggest a multitude of considerations, suited to convince the understanding, and to affect the heart. But we purposely omit them. Why should we occupy your time, and weary your patience, with arguments and motives urged by mortal lips, when we have before us an oracle, which, in a few impressive words, will inform us, at once, what we ought to do? To this oracle we refer the seaman's cause. To its unerring decisions we appeal; and in this appeal, we doubt not, you will cordially unite. It is presumed that the only question, relative to this subject, which any individual present can wish to propose, is this; Is it a duty incumbent on me, to aid in promoting the moral and religious improvement of seamen? We may consider this question as having been proposed in the silence of the heart, and He who reads the heart has given this answer:—If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, I knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall he not render to every man according to his works? Is not this answer sufficiently explicit? Is it not as perfectly applicable to the case before us, as if it had been originally uttered with an exclusive reference to seamen? Are they not "drawn" by powerful temptations, as by a thousand cords, to that second death from which there is no resurrection? Are not many of them "ready to be slain" by their vices? enemies which kill, not the body only, but the soul. And if we neglect to furnish them with the Scriptures, do we not "forbear" to attempt their deliverance? Should any one still consider this answer as inapplicable, let him impute the error, not to the oracle, but to the erring lips which gave it utterance, and listen to another response: Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it, but, as thou hast opportunity, do good to all men. Can any thing more be necessary? Surely, no one will insult Jehovah by asking, whether it is doing good to seamen, to place his word in their hands. Surely, no one can doubt whether, should He address us from heaven, he would command us to furnish them with the Scriptures. Some may, however, wish to inquire, whether the efforts, which are now making to pro-

mote the religious interests of seamen, will be crowned with ultimate success. To their inquiries this is the answer: The abundance of the seas shall be converted unto the church of God; the ships of Tarshish shall bring her sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, even as the waters cover the seas. My hearers, we shall add no more. When God speaks, it becomes man to be silent.

SERMON L.

THE GOSPEL, GLAD TIDINGS.

The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.—1 Timothy i. 11.

Among the numerous burning and shining lights which our blessed Saviour has, at different periods, placed in his golden candlesticks to enlighten the church, during the long and gloomy night of his absence from the world, perhaps none have burned brighter, with a flame more vehement, or with rays more clear, or shone with more constant, bright and unclouded lustre, than the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Of all whose characters have been transmitted to us, either in profane or sacred history, he appears to have made the nearest approaches to the Sun of righteousness, and, in consequence, to have felt most powerfully the attractive influence of his love; to have imbibed most plentifully his enlightening, life-giving beams; to have reflected most perfectly his glorious image; and to have moved with the greatest velocity in the orbit of duty. His life affords a striking verification of our Saviour's remark, that to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. As his devotional feelings were peculiarly strong and lively, so is the language in which he expresses them. It seems to hold a kind of middle rank between that which is employed by other Christians, and that which will hereafter be poured forth by saints and angels before

the throne. Thoughts that glow, and words that burn, are every where scattered through his pages. One instance of this, among many which will occur to every pious mind, we have in our text. Never, perhaps, since the gospel was first promulgated to a dying world, has it been more justly or happily described, than in this brief but glowing passage, in which the Apostle styles it—the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. I need not inform you that the word, gospel, literally signifies glad tidings. Substitute these words for the term made use of in our text, and you have, the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God. What other sounds, like these, ever vibrated upon mortal ears? What other combination of words could be formed, so full of meaning, of energy, of life and rapture, as this? Who but the fervent Apostle, or rather, who but the Holy Spirit, by whom he was inspired, could ever have formed such a combination? And who does not wish to understand and feel the full import of these divinely inspired, enrapturing words? What ear is not erect, what mind does not expand, what heart does not open and dilate itself, to drink in, the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God, committed to a mortal's trust? Would to heaven, my friends, you could on this occasion hear the import of these tidings fully unfolded; their infinite worth and importance clearly stated. But this you will never hear on earth; for here we know but in part, and, of course, can prophesy but in part; but when that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away. Till that day of perfect light shall burst upon us, the day in which we shall know even as we are known, you must be content to see the inestimable treasure of the gospel dispensed from earthen vessels, dispensed in scanty measures, and too often debased by the impurities of the frail vessels which contain it.

In attempting to dispense to you a portion of this treasure on the present occasion, I shall, in the first place, endeavor to show what the gospel of Christ is, by illustrating the description given of it in our text. From this description we learn,

I. That the gospel of Christ is "tidings." This is the most simple and proper conception we can form of it. It is not an abstract truth, it is not a merely speculative proposition, it is not an abstruse system of philosophy or ethics, which reason might have discovered or formed; but it is simply tidings, a

message, a report, as the prophet styles it, announcing to us important intelligence, intelligence of a connected succession of facts; of facts which reason could never have discovered; intelligence of what was devised in the counsels of eternity for the redemption of our ruined race, of what has since been done in time to effect it, and of what will be done hereafter for its full completion when time shall be no more. It is true, that, in addition to these tidings, the gospel of Christ contains a system of doctrines, of precepts and of motives; but it is no less true, that all these doctrines, precepts and motives, are founded upon the facts, communicated by those tidings in which the gospel essentially consists; and that to their connection with these facts, they owe all their influence and importance. Perfectly agreeable to this representation, is the account given us of the primitive preachers, and of their mode of preaching the gospel. They acted like men who felt that they were sent, not so much to dispute and argue, as to proclaim tidings, to bear testimony to facts. Their preaching is styled their testimony, and the very word which we render to preach, literally signifies to make proclamation as a herald. Hence St. Paul speaks of the ministry which he had received to *testify* the gospel of the grace of God; and St John, referring to himself and his fellow apostles, says, we do *testify* that God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. The gospel of Christ, then, essentially consists in tidings; and to proclaim these tidings and testify their truth in connexion with the doctrines and precepts, of which they are the basis, and with the consequences of receiving and of rejecting them, is to preach this gospel as it was originally preached.

2. The tidings which constitute the gospel of Christ are glad tidings; tidings which are designed and perfectly adapted to excite joy and gladness in all who receive them. That they are so, is abundantly evident from the nature of the intelligence which they communicate. They are tidings of an all-sufficient Saviour for the self-destroyed, of an offended God reconciled, of pardon to the justly condemned, of sanctification to the polluted, of honor and glory to the degraded, of deliverance to captives, of freedom to slaves, of sight to the blind, of happiness to the wretched, of a forfeited heaven regained, of life, everlasting life to the dead. And must I prove that these are glad tidings? Does the sun shine? are circles round? is happiness desirable?

is pain disagreeable? And is it not equally evident, that the tidings we are describing are glad tidings of great joy.

But it may in some cases be necessary to prove even self-evident truths. To the blind it may be necessary to prove that the sun shines. And in a spiritual sense we are blind. We need arguments to convince us, that the Sun of righteousness is a bright and glorious luminary; that the tidings of his rising upon a dark world are joyful tidings. Such arguments it is easy to adduce, arguments sufficient to produce conviction even in the blind. If you wish for such arguments, go and seek them among the heathen, who never heard of the gospel of Christ. There, see darkness covering the earth, and gross darkness the people. See those dark places of the earth, filled not only with the habitations, but with the temples of lust and cruelty. Enter into conversation with the inhabitants of those gloomy regions. Ask them who made the world; they cannot tell. Who created themselves? they know not. Ask what God they worship, they will point to a plant or animal, a stock or a stone. Ask how the favor of these miserable deities is to be obtained; their priests, their temples, their religious ceremonies with one voice reply, by the performance of rites indecent, cruel and absurd; by tormenting our bodies, by sacrificing our children, by acts of brutish sensuality and diabolical cruelty. Ask them where happiness is to be found, they scarcely know its name. Ask for what purpose they were created, they are at a loss for a reply. They know neither whence they came, nor whither they are to go. View them in the night of affliction: No star of Bethlehem, with mild lustre, cheers or softens its gloom. View them on the bed of sickness: No kind hand administers to them the balm of Gilead; there is no interpreter, no intercessor to say, Deliver them from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom. Contemplate them in their last agonies. No atoning blood speaks peace to their guilty conscience; no gospel brings life and immortality to their view; no blessed Comforter points to an opening heaven; no kind shepherd goes with them through the dark valley which leads to the dominions of death; no Saviour appears to disrobe the monster of his terrors, or deprive him of his fatal sting, but they are left to grapple with him unassisted and alone. If in this awful conflict they ever seem to display courage and fortitude, it is only the fortitude of

insensibility and the courage of despair. In a word, they live without God, they die without hope, their situation is, in many respects, more wretched than that of the beasts that perish. Yet such, my hearers, would have been your situation, were it not for the gospel of Christ. Who, then, will say that the tidings which it communicates are not glad tidings of great joy?

Are any still unconvinced? Do you demand stronger evidences of this truth? You shall have them. Come with me to the garden of Eden. Look back to the hour which succeeded man's apostacy: See the golden chain, which bound man to God, sundered apparently forever, and this wretched world groaning under the weight of human guilt and of its Creator's curse, sinking down, far down, into a bottomless abyss of misery and despair. See that tremendous being who is a consuming fire, encircling it on every side, and wrapping it as it were in an atmosphere of flame. Hear from his lips the tremendous sentence, Man has sinned, and man must die. See the king of terrors advancing, with gigantic strides, to execute the awful sentence, spreading desolation through the vegetable, animal and rational kingdoms, and brandishing his resistless dart, in triumph over a prostrate world. See the grave expanding her marble jaws to receive whatever might fall before his wide wasting scythe, and hell beneath yawning dreadfully to engulf forever its guilty, helpless, despairing victims. Such was the situation of our ruined race after the apostacy. There was nothing before every child of Adam, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. There was but one road through this world, but one gate that opened out of it,—the wide gate and the broad way that leads to destruction.

My friends, endeavor to realize, if you can, the horrors of such a situation. I am aware that to do this is by no means easy. You have so long been accustomed to hear the tidings of salvation, that you can scarcely conceive of what would have been our situation, had no Saviour appeared. But endeavor, for a moment, to forget that you ever heard of Christ, or his gospel. View yourselves as immortal beings, hastening to eternity, with the curse of God's broken law, like a flaming sword pursuing you, death with his dart dipped in mortal poison awaiting you, a dark cloud fraught with the lightnings of divine vengeance

rolling over your heads, your feet standing in slippery places in darkness, and the bottomless pit beneath, expecting your fall. Then, when not only all hope, but all possibility of escape seemed taken away, suppose the flaming sword suddenly extinguished, the sting of death extracted, the Sun of righteousness bursting forth, painting a rainbow upon the before threatening cloud, a golden ladder let down from the opening gates of heaven, while a choir of angels swiftly descending, exclaim, Behold, we bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. Would you, could you, while contemplating such a scene, and listening to the angelic message, doubt whether it communicated glad tidings? Would you not rather unite with them in exclaiming, Glad tidings, glad tidings, glory to God in the highest, that there is peace on earth and good will to men?

If this be not sufficient, if you still doubt, go and contemplate the effect which these tidings have produced wherever they have been believed. We judge of the nature of a cause by the effects which it produces, and, therefore, if the reception of the gospel has always occasioned joy and gladness, we may justly infer that it is glad tidings. And has it not done this? What supported our trembling first parents, when sinking under the weight of their Maker's curse, and contemplating with shuddering horrors the bottomless abyss into which they had plunged themselves and their wretched offspring? What enabled Enoch to walk with God? What cheered all the pious antediluvian patriarchs through their wearisome pilgrimage of several hundred years? What consoled them in affliction? what supported them in death? Nothing, I answer, nothing but the precious words in which the gospel was first promulgated to a ruined world: The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. This line, this little line, in which the glad tidings are so briefly and obscurely revealed, contains, so far as we know, all the consolation which the children of God enjoyed for almost two thousand years. Here the well-spring of salvation was first opened to the view of mortals; here the waters of life, which now flow broad and deep as a river, first bubbled up in the sandy desert; and thousands now in heaven stooped and drank and live forever, tasting the joys of heaven on earth. The next intimation of the gospel was given to Abraham in the gracious promise, In

thee and thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. This passage is little less brief and obscure than the other; but what effects did it produce upon the mind of the venerable patriarch? Let our Saviour inform us:—Abraham earnestly desired to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad. Yes the distant view of a Saviour through the long vista of two thousand years, was sufficient to fill him with joy. What then would he have felt, had he seen what we see, and heard the tidings which we hear? had he seen that grain of mustard seed, which he contemplated with rapture, expanding into a tree of life; whose branches fill the earth, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations? Nor did the gospel, darkly as it was revealed, produce less happy effects on the minds of other ancient believers. Witness the case of Job. See him for the trial of his faith, delivered into the power of him whose tender mercies are cruel. See him stripped of all his possessions, deprived of his children by a sudden and violent death, ridiculed and tempted by his wife, denounced as a hypocrite by his friends, covered from head to foot with ulcers as raging and painful as hell could make them, and his soul transfixed by the arrows of the Almighty, the poison whereof drank up his spirits. See him even then, when heaven, earth and hell seemed combined against him, when all God's waves and billows went over him, rising above them all, fixing the eye of faith upon the promised Messiah, and with unbroken confidence triumphantly exclaiming, I know that my Redeemer liveth,—that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. But on this part of my subject I cannot farther enlarge; for time would fail me to tell of David, of Isaiah, of Daniel, of Zechariah, and of the many other prophets, kings and righteous men, who desired to hear the tidings which we hear, and rejoiced in the anticipation of a Saviour's birth. Never did the psalmist pour forth such enraptured strains, never did he strike his harp with so much of a seraph's fire, never did the prophets employ such glowing language, as when, "rapt into future times," by the spirit of prophecy, they contemplated and endeavored to describe the advent of that Saviour, whose incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and triumph the gospel announces. Suffice it to say, that all the religious joy and consolation, which was tasted

in this world for four thousand years, flowed from prophetic intimations of a Saviour's birth. Yes, to this event every pious eye, during all those years, looked forward, striving to catch a glimpse of it through the gloom of ages; to hear predictions of this event every pious ear was open.

At length, those who waited for the consolation of Israel are gratified. The voice of a herald is heard, exclaiming, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. He who was emphatically the desire of all nations, appears, and the joy occasioned by the tidings of his birth is such, as we should expect from the joy which expectation of his birth had excited. See the wise men of the East, rejoicing with exceeding great joy, when they saw the star which guided them to the feet of their new born Saviour. See the shepherds rejoicing and glorifying God, while they beheld him lying in a manger. Hear aged Simeon, while with streaming eyes and an overflowing heart he held the infant Saviour in his arms, exclaiming, Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Hear the acclamations of joy, of wonder, of praise, which followed his steps, wherever he went about doing good. Mingle with the throngs that surrounded him on his entrance into Jerusalem. Hear a prophetic voice exclaiming, Rejoice greatly, and shout, Oh daughter of Jerusalem,—for, behold, thy King cometh unto thee, just and having salvation. Hear the whole multitude, in obedience to this command, breaking forth into joy, and with a loud voice glorifying God, while even the children cry, Hosannah to the Son of David! blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Follow the progress of his gospel through the world. See great joy in the city of Samaria, because Philip had preached Christ to them. See the Gentiles of Antioch glad, because they heard that to them this Saviour was to be preached. See a multitude of believers, in almost all ages of the world, rejoicing in an unseen Saviour with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Then look up, and see heaven sympathizing in the joy of earth. See angels desiring to look into these things. Hear them exulting over every sinner that repents. Listen to the song of the redeemed: Now unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion forever. Hear the eternal Father of the universe justifying all these expres-

sions of joy by exclaiming, Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, forests, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and glorified himself in Israel. Then pause and say, whether the tidings which excite all this joy are not glad tidings? Have patriarchs and prophets been deceived? Were the apostles and primitive Christians mad? Are the angels of light infatuated or blind? Is the all-wise God in an error? Does he call upon all his creatures to rejoice, when no cause of joy exists? You must either assert this, or acknowledge that the gospel of Christ is glad tidings of great joy.

3. The gospel is not only glad tidings, but glorious glad tidings. That it is so, is asserted in other passages, as well as in our text. St. Paul, contrasting the gospel and the law, with a view to show the superiority of the former, observes that if the ministration of death was glorious, the ministration of the Spirit must be still more glorious; for if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. Glory is the display of excellence, or perfection. That the gospel contains a grand display of the moral excellencies and perfections of Jehovah, will be denied by none, but the spiritually blind, who are ignorant of its nature. But to give only a general view of this grand display of God's character in a single discourse, or even in a volume, is impossible. With less difficulty might we enclose the sun in a lantern. We shall not, therefore, attempt to describe a subject, which must forever be degraded, not only by the descriptions, but by the conceptions, I will not say of men, but of the highest archangel before the throne. On no page less ample than that of the eternal, all-infolding mind, which devised the gospel plan of salvation, can its glories be displayed, nor by any inferior mind can they be fully comprehended. Suffice it to say, that here the moral character of Jehovah shines full-orbed and complete: here all the fulness of the God-head, all the insufferable splendors of Deity, burst at once upon our aching sight: here the manifold perfections of God, holiness and goodness, justice and mercy, truth and grace, majesty and condescension, hatred of sin and compassion for sinners, are harmoniously blended, like the particolored rays of solar light in one pure blaze of dazzling white-

ness. Here, rather than on any of his other works, he founds his claims to the highest admiration, gratitude and love of his creatures:—here is the work, which ever has called forth, and which through eternity will continue to call forth the most rapturous praises of the celestial choirs, and feed the ever glowing fires of devotion in their breasts; for the glory which shines in the gospel is the glory which illuminates heaven, and the Lamb that was slain is the light thereof. To the truth of these assertions, all will assent, who can say with the apostle, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

If any doubt respecting the character of the gospel still exists in your minds, it must surely vanish when you recollect that it is,

4. The gospel of God, of the blessed God. It is composed of tidings, of which God is the author, tidings which God himself first proclaimed in the garden of Eden to our ruined progenitors, which angels afterwards caught from his lips, and which his Spirit has since dictated to inspired messengers. They are the tidings, not only of God, but of the blessed God; of a being unutterably happy in himself, and disposed to communicate his happiness to creatures. They are the effulgence of the God of glory; they are the overflowings of the fountain of happiness: they proceed from Him in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore. If then we may judge of the stream by the fountain, or of any work by its author, who can doubt that the gospel is glorious glad tidings, since it is the tidings of the blessed God. What that is not glorious can proceed from the God of glory? What that is not calculated to give joy to all holy beings, can proceed from the God of happiness and peace?

Having thus attempted to show what the gospel is, I proceed,

II. To consider its human administration. It was committed, says the apostle, to my trust. But why? I answer, the gospel was no more designed to remain locked up in the breast of its author, than the rays of light were intended to remain in the body of the sun. That its glad tidings might produce their de-

signed effect, it was necessary they should fly abroad, and be made known to mortals. But by whom should they be communicated? The importance of the message seemed to require, that Jehovah himself, or at least the most exalted of his creatures, should be the messenger. But this, human weakness forbade. It is evident from facts recorded in the Scriptures, that whenever Jehovah has spoken to man, either in person, or by the ministry of his angels, his hearers have been dazzled, dismayed and overwhelmed. They did not retain sufficient self-possession to understand or even listen to his words. And though, when Christ appeared as the Son of man, in a state of humiliation, his hearers were not thus affected, yet since he has re-ascended to his native heaven, the glories in which he is arrayed are too insufferably bright for mortal eyes to behold; as is evident from the effects which his appearance produced upon the beloved disciple, St. John. In condescension to our weakness, therefore, God has been pleased to commit the gospel to individuals selected from our own ruined race; individuals, who, having experienced its life-giving and beatifying power, are prepared to recommend it to their perishing fellow sinners. Of these individuals, the first to whom it was committed were the apostles; it was committed to them as a proclamation is committed by earthly princes to their heralds, not to be retained, but communicated. For a similar purpose, it is still committed to ministers of an inferior rank; for he who gave apostles, prophets and evangelists for the work of the ministry, has also given pastors and teachers for the same glorious work. The only difference is, that they received their commission and instructions immediately from Christ himself, while we receive ours through the medium of their writings. Christ was their Bible, and they are ours. But notwithstanding this difference, every real minister of Christ, at the present day, may with strict truth and propriety say, I also am an ambassador of Christ, and his gospel has been committed to my trust. If any deny this assertion, and demand proofs of its truth, it is sufficient to reply, that God acknowledges us to be his ambassadors, and stamps his seal upon our commission, by the effects which he produces through our instrumentality. The gospel of Christ, when faithfully dispensed by its ministers, still produces the same effects as were produced by it when uttered by himself and his

apostles. In our lips, as well as in theirs, it proves a savor of life unto life, to all that receive, and of death unto death to all who reject it. In our lips, as well as in theirs, it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. To this proof of a divine commission, St. Paul himself appealed, when it was denied. Speaking to those who were converted by his ministry he says, the seals of my apostleship are ye in the Lord. Ye are our epistle of recommendation, known and read of all men; forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistles of Christ, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God; not on tables of stone, but on fleshly tables of the heart. To similar proofs of a divine commission, every faithful minister of the gospel may still appeal; for, blessed be God, none of them are without such seals of their ministry; such epistles of recommendation from Christ, who hath made them ministers of the New Testament, not merely of the letter which killeth, but of the Spirit which giveth life.

The view which has been taken of the gospel of Christ, suggests many highly important and interesting remarks; but the time requires me to omit them, and to proceed to the customary addresses.

My fathers and brethren in the ministry, is the gospel, which has been committed to our trust, the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God? How delightful, how honorable, then, is our employment, and how unspeakable are our obligations to him who has called us to it; who has allowed us to be put in trust with the gospel; that gospel, which was first preached by himself to our first parents in paradise; that gospel, which it has been the highest honor and happiness of prophets to predict, of apostles to preach, of martyrs to seal with their blood, and even of angels to announce and celebrate! Only to be permitted to hear this gospel, is justly considered as a distinguished favor. What then must it be to preach it? Those who experience its power to save, who are allowed to taste the blessings which it imparts, feel as if a whole eternity would be merely sufficient to pay their mighty debt of gratitude to the Redeemer. What then ought we to feel, through whom that saving power is exerted; by whose instrumentality those blessings are conferred, and who, receiving mercy of the Lord to be faithful, are enabled to save not only ourselves, but them that hear us! Well

may each of us say with the apostle, I thank my God, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. Well may we with him count not even our lives dear unto ourselves, that we may fulfil the ministry which has been committed to us, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And well may we exhort each other in his language: Seeing we have received this ministry, to faint not, but to be instant in season and out of season. Heathen writers inform us of a soldier, who, when sent out by his general with tidings of a victory, would not stop to extract a thorn which had deeply pierced his foot, until he had delivered his message to the Senate. And shall we, then, when sent by Jehovah with such a message, a message the faithful delivery of which involves his glory and the eternal happiness of our fellow creatures—shall we linger, shall we suffer any personal inconveniences, any difficulties, any real or fancied dangers, to interrupt or retard us in the execution of our work? Shall we, with the true water of life, the true elixir of immortality in our possession, suffer our own private concerns to divert us from presenting it to the dying, and forcing it into the lips of the dead? Shall we, with Aaron's censer in our hands, hesitate whether to rush between the living and the dead, when the anger of the Lord is kindled, when the plague has already begun its ravages, and thousands are falling at our right hand, and ten thousand at our left? Shall we wait till to-morrow to present the bread of life to the famished wretch, who, before to-morrow arrives, may expire for want of it? Surely if we can do this, if we can be so regardless of our obligations to God, and of our duty to man, the least punishment which we can expect, is to be debarred from that salvation which we neglected to afford to others, and to be made answerable for the blood of all the souls who, in consequence of this neglect, perished in their sins. Let us then, my fathers and brethren, never forget, that the king's business requireth haste, and that who or whatever stands still, we must not. Let the sun pause in his course, though half the world should be wrapped in frost and darkness by his delay; let rivers stagnate in their channels, though an expecting nation should perish with thirst upon its flood-forsaken banks; let long-looked for showers stop in mid-air, though earth, with a thousand famished lips, invoke their descent; but let those who are sent with the life-giving tidings of pardon, peace,

and salvation, to an expiring world, never pause, never look or wish for rest, till their Master's welcome voice shall call them from their field of labor to everlasting repose; to that world where those, who, as burning or shining lights, have turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars, and as the brightness of the firmament forever and ever.

A few words to the assembly, and I have done. Is it true, my hearers, that the gospel, which you have often heard, is the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God? Then in every one by whom it is truly believed, it will infallibly excite holy joy, admiration and praise; for every report which is thus believed must produce effects corresponding to its nature and import. If you hear and believe mournful tidings, they will occasion grief. If you hear and believe joyful tidings, they will no less certainly occasion joy. If you hear and believe an account of any glorious enterprise, or splendid act of liberality, it will call forth admiration and applause. If then you really believe the glorious glad tidings of God, you must and will rejoice, you will admire and bless the Author. Has the gospel, then, produced these effects upon you? Do you know what it is to be filled with joy and peace in believing? Can you, do you unite with the inhabitants of heaven, in ascribing to Christ all that heaven can give? In a word, do you feel that the gospel is glorious glad tidings of great joy? and is it the language of your hearts, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift? If not, it is most certain that you never believed the gospel; for the apostle assures us, that it does work effectually in all that believe; and we have already seen that it has, in all ages, filled the hearts of believers with joy, and their lips with praise. And if you believe not the gospel, how awful is your responsibility, your criminality, and your danger! In your view, the Sun of righteousness has no beams. You see nothing lovely in that Saviour, whom all good beings, on earth and in heaven, love with the most ardent affection. Surely then you are wrong, or they are. Either they must be deceived, or you must be blind. In your breasts the most delightful tidings, that ever vibrated on mortal ears, excite no joy. To you the glorious gospel of the blessed God, that gospel which is the wisdom of God unto salvation, that gospel whence flows all the happiness that ever will be tasted by man, on earth or in heaven, and which will,

through eternity, excite the admiration and the praises of angels, appears little better than foolishness. In vain, as it respects yourselves, have prophets prophesied; in vain have apostles preached; in vain have martyrs sealed the truth with their blood; in vain have angels descended from heaven with messages of love; in vain has the Son of God expired in agonies on the accursed tree; in vain has the Holy Spirit been sent to strive with sinners; in vain has a revelation of all these wonders been given. You still refuse to believe, and by your unbelief practically charge the God of truth with falsehood; for, says the apostle, he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he hath not believed the record which God gave of his Son. Unhappy men! To you the awful words of the apostle apply, in all their force: If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. On you the dreadful sentence falls: He that believeth not, shall be condemned. Your character and doom are described in the declaration: He who believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

"Woe to the wretch, who never felt
The inward pangs of pious grief;
But adds to all his crying guilt
The stubborn sin of unbelief.

"The law condemns the rebel dead;
Under the wrath of God he lies;
He seals the curse on his own head,
And with a double vengeance dies."

And will you die under the weight of this double vengeance? Will you go to the regions of despair, from a world, which has been moistened by a Saviour's atoning blood? from a world which has resounded with the glad tidings of pardon, peace, and salvation? O, do not, I beseech you in God's name, and for Christ's sake, do not be infatuated; do not madly reject the glad tidings. Once more I proclaim them in your ears. Once more I declare unto you, that it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken! for unto you, to each one of you, is the word of this salvation sent.

SERMON LI.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. JOHN xx. 28.

WHAT think ye of Christ? is a question, which ought to be proposed to all who bear the Christian name, and to which every one should be ready to give a clear and explicit answer; especially at the present day, when so many seem disposed to think wrong, or not to think at all, on this interesting subject. Whether the perilous times, foretold by the apostle, have arrived, when men shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, I shall not undertake to determine; but it must be evident to every one, that professed Christians entertain not only different, but contrary opinions, respecting the character of our blessed Saviour, and the object of his mission; and it is equally evident that, while we thus think differently on these subjects we cannot all think right. Some represent the Saviour as truly and essentially God; others consider him only as a creature, more or less highly exalted; while not a few reduce him to a mere weak and helpless mortal, whose death was intended, not to make an atonement for the sins of the world, but to attest the truth of his instructions, and afford an example of patience and resignation.

Now it is, I think, abundantly evident, that of these opinions some must be essentially and fatally wrong. I am aware, indeed, that some deny this, and contend that all may be essentially right, though they differ in some points of little consequence; and that it is no matter what a man believes, provided he be sincere in his belief, and his external conduct be good. But the character of our Saviour is not one of these points of little consequence, concerning which men may differ in opinion, and yet be right in the main. On the contrary, it is the very sum and essence of the gospel scheme of salvation, and if we are not right on this point, we are right in nothing. The divinity and atonement of our Saviour, are truths of such momentous importance, that either they who assert, or those who deny them must be guilty of a damnable heresy, if there be any such thing. This will, I trust, appear evident, from a moment's consideration.

If Christ be not truly and essentially God, then they who worship him as such, are guilty of gross and abominable idolatry, in giving that glory and honor to a creature, which is due to the Creator alone; and how a gross idolater can be a good Christian, it is difficult to conceive. On the contrary, we are told that he who denieth the Son, denieth the Father also; that he who believeth not the record which God gave of his Son, hath made him a liar; and that he who doth not honor the Son, honoreth not the Father. Now if Christ be God, then those who deny it, deny God the Father; they make him a liar, and they do not honor him as God; and how they can do all this, and yet be Christians, it is not so easy to determine.

You see, therefore, that the doctrine of our Saviour's divinity is not a mere speculative or metaphysical doctrine, which may be admitted or rejected without any ill consequences; but it is a doctrine which involves consequences of the utmost importance, and of which either the opposers or the favorers must be essentially in the wrong.

Nor is it any breach of charity to say this. Charity has nothing to do with doctrines. It does not require us to represent truth and falsehood as equally right, or to suppose that every road will conduct men to heaven, as well as the strait and narrow path pointed out by our Saviour. But it requires us to love and pity and pray for those whom we think to be wrong, that

God may bring them to the acknowledgement of the truth. It does not require us to think, that the hearts of all men are naturally good, when the word of God plainly asserts the contrary. It does not require us to think those to be right, who differ from us in opinion, for this would imply a belief that we are wrong; but it requires that we should by no means revile, despise, or persecute them on account of their erroneous opinions, but be equally ready to do kind offices to them, as to those who adopt our own sentiments. In a word, it requires us to separate the person from the fault, to hate the sin, while we love and pity the sinner; to shun and condemn the ways of error, but be kind and friendly to those who stray therein. He who does this, and he alone, possesses that charity which the gospel requires.

In the passage which has now been read, as the subject of this discourse, we find Thomas, one of the apostles, addressing our blessed Saviour as his Lord and his God. To justify those who follow his example in this respect, and to enable them to give a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear, I shall endeavor to show, in the following discourse, that Jesus Christ is truly Lord and God, as well as man; or, in other words, that he possessed a truly divine, as well as human nature.

Since this is a subject altogether beyond the limited sphere of our rational powers, it would never have been discovered, nor can it now be proved, but by a revelation from God to man. To the revelation, therefore, which God has given us, must we resort for arguments, to prove the proposition we are considering; and if we find it there revealed, we are bound to receive it, though it may be involved in mysteries which we cannot comprehend.

Our first argument in favor of our Saviour's proper divinity, will be drawn from those passages which intimate or assert a plurality of persons in the Godhead; of which there are several in the Old Testament. When God was about to create man we find him saying, Let *us* make man in our own image. When man fell, God said, The man is become as one of *us*. When he resolved to confound the builders of Babel, he said, Let *us* go down, etc. Now it is impossible satisfactorily to account for this mode of expression, without supposing that there are more persons than one in the Godhead, and this supposition is rendered highly probable by various other passages, which plainly imply

the same thing. In a great variety of instances throughout the Old Testament, the word which we render God in the singular, in the original is Gods. Thus, in Deuteronomy it is said, in the original, the Lord our Gods is one Lord. In Kings, we find the people exclaiming, the Lord, he is Gods, the Lord, he is Gods. And so likewise in Job, Where is God my Makers, who giveth songs in the night. To mention only two other instances of the many which might be adduced, we find it written in the original, Isaiah 54, Thy Makers is thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, and thy Redeemers the Holy One of Israel, the Gods of the whole earth shall He be called. So, in like manner, in Ecclesiastes it is written, Remember thy Creators in the days of thy youth. This doctrine of a plurality of persons in the Godhead, being thus intimated in the Old Testament, is openly and clearly taught in the New. Among other proofs of this, we find the apostles commanded to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But surely, our Saviour never would have thus joined his own name with that of the Father, in this solemn manner, had he not himself been God. To which we may add, that had the Apostle considered Christ as a mere creature, he would not have united his name with that of God the Father, in the benediction with which he concludes some of his epistles. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen. To place this point beyond all doubt or controversy, however, the beloved disciple informs us, that there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one; and though the opposers of our Saviour's divinity have endeavored to prove that this text is an interpolation, yet they have never succeeded; and any one may perceive, by reading the chapter, that the sense would be incomplete without it.

Our second argument in support of the doctrine of our Saviour's proper divinity, is drawn from his own conduct and declarations while here on earth. Those were such, that unless he was essentially God, he must be considered as an impostor and blasphemer, as the Jews represented him. Though he knew how exceedingly prone the Jews were to idolatry, and how many reasons they had for worshipping him as God, yet he took no

pains to prevent it, but on the contrary, seemed to encourage it by every means in his power. Instead of saying like the ancient prophets, Thus saith the Lord, he ever says, Thus I say, and hence he was said to teach as one having authority. When the prophets performed miracles, they always did it in the name of God; the apostles wrought them in the name of Christ, but our Saviour always wrought them in his own name, and by his own power. Whether he raised the dead, or cast out a devil, or calmed the tempestuous waves, it was always done in the same Godlike manner. The prophets, the apostles, and even angels, never allowed themselves to be worshipped on any pretence whatever; but he not only allowed it once and again, but expressly taught, that all men ought to honor the Son, even as they honor the Father, that he was the Son of God, and that he and his Father were one. Now, suppose all this done by a mere man, or by any created being; suppose such a being teaching with authority; working miracles in his own name, forgiving sins whenever he pleased, suffering himself to be worshipped and addressed by the titles Lord and God; nay more, claiming to be one with the Father, and to be honored as he was honored; and then say, whether he could be considered as a very meek, humble, and submissive being; say whether you should not consider him an impostor and blasphemer? It is evident that the Jews who heard him call himself the Son of God, supposed that he meant to claim divine honors, and for this very reason they were about once and again to stone him, because, as they said, he was guilty of blasphemy, and though he was only a man, made himself God. Now here was a fair opportunity to rectify their mistake, if such it was, and had he not meant to be understood as claiming divine honors, he would most certainly, have immediately undeceived them. He would have shrunk with horror from the idea of making himself God; and have told the Jews plainly and instantly, that he was not God, but only a man, or at most, a created being. But instead of this, we find him still claiming equality with God, and at length suffering himself to be crucified for this very thing, for this very charge of blasphemy, founded on his calling himself the Son of God, which he might so easily have explained to their satisfaction. We might insist longer on this part of our subject, did our time permit; but we can only request any unprejudiced person, to read the history of our Sa-

viour's life, and if he does not feel an irresistible conviction, that he meant to be considered as something more than a creature, we know not the meaning either of his words or actions.

A third argument, in favor of our Saviour's divinity, may be drawn from those passages in which all the attributes and perfections of Deity are ascribed to Christ. Thus for instance, is God eternal; so is Christ. I, says he, am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending, who was, and is, and is to come. He has neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but his throne is forever and ever, and his years shall not fail. Is God self-existent? So is Christ. He, we are told, has life in himself, so that no one has power to take his life from him; but he laid it down of himself. I, says he, have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again. Is God unchangeable? So is Christ. Jesus Christ, says the apostle, is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Is God omnipresent? So is Christ. Wheresoever, says he, two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them; Lo, I am with you always, says he to his apostles, to the end of the world. Is God omniscient? So is Christ. Lord, says Peter, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Before Philip called thee, said he to Nathaniel, while thou wert under the fig tree, I saw thee. Does God search the heart? So does Christ. He knew, we are told, what was in man; and once and again he perceived the thoughts, both of his enemies and friends. Is God omnipotent? So is Christ; for I, says he, am the Almighty. Is God infinite in wisdom? Christ is the only wise God our Saviour. In a word, there is no attribute or perfection ascribed to God, which is not in like manner ascribed to Christ.

Fourthly: The works and offices of Christ prove his divinity, since none but God, could do what he has done and must do. As he himself declares, whatsoever things the Father doth, these doeth the Son likewise. Did God make all things for himself? The apostle informs us, that by Christ the world was made; that he in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth, and that the heavens are the work of his hands. By him, we are also told, were all things created that are in heaven and in the earth, whether visible or invisible, all things were created, not only by him but for him; so that without him there was not any thing

made which was made. Does God preserve and overrule the world he has made? Christ, we are told, upholds all things by the word of his power; and in him all things subsist. Is it the prerogative of God alone to forgive sins? Christ forgave sins not only once, but often in his own name. Does God raise up and quicken the dead; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. Does God act the part of a father, a lawgiver, a shepherd, and a protector to his people? Christ is all this to his church. Does God reveal himself as the only Saviour? Christ is the Saviour of lost men. Is God the judge of the whole earth? Christ is the judge of quick and dead, who will one day judge the world. In a word, Christ is the Creator, Upholder, Governor, Saviour, and Judge of the world, and consequently he must be God. Who but God could call all things out of nothing by the breath of his mouth, and uphold them by the mere word of his power? Who but God is capable of undertaking the great work of man's redemption? A creature, be he ever so exalted, owes all that he is to his Maker, and when he has done and suffered all in his power, he is still an unprofitable servant, and has done no more than it was his duty to do. Consequently he can perform no works of supererogation. He can do nothing to save others. The most he can hope for, is to save himself. Who but God is capable of acting the part of head to his church, and a shepherd to his people, scattered as they are over so many different parts of the world? Who but he could listen to so many different prayers, as are daily and hourly offered up before him, and send to each an answer of peace,—succoring the tempted, comforting the distressed, supporting the weak, reclaiming the backslider, enlightening the benighted mind, and causing all things to work together for the good of his people? Who but God is capable of sustaining the character, and performing the office of the Judge of quick and dead? Who but the only wise and omniscient Jehovah, who sees the end from the beginning, could justly and accurately sum up the guilt of each individual, in such a manner as to assign to all their just recompense of reward? The being who could do this, must be intimately acquainted with the character, life and disposition of every one of the human race; he must know precisely what advantages were enjoyed; what helps and what hindrances, what warnings and what temptations, fell to the lot of each one before him.

He must know, not only every thought, word and action, but the principles from which they proceeded, the motives which induced them, the time, manner and other circumstances by which they were attended, and the effects which they sooner or 'ater produced. Let any one pursue this chain of thought in his mind, and consider what is required to constitute a suitable judge of an assembled world, and instead of thinking that any being, less than divine, could sustain this office, he will wonder how even God himself can perform what it requires.

Again: Another argument in favor of the divinity of Christ, may be drawn from the worship which was, is, and will be paid him. In our text, and in various other instances, we find him worshipped by men, and we have already observed that God requires all men to honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. We find the devils also worshipping him, and deprecating his wrath in the humblest manner: Jesus, thou Son of God, Most High, we beseech thee that thou torment us not. Nor is this confined to men and devils; for even the blessed angels themselves, not only did, but do, and will continue to worship him. When God bringeth his first begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him. The apostle tells us, that to Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess him Lord, unto the praise and glory of the Father. In the vision, with which the beloved disciple was favored, of the heavenly world, he saw in the midst of the throne of God, and of the four living creatures, and of the elders, a Lamb as it had been slain, and this Lamb was equally with God the object of their worship and adoration. The four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, we are told, fell down before the Lamb, casting their crowns at his feet; and the apostle beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, crying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and wisdom, and riches, and glory, and honor, and blessing; and every creature which is in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him who sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.

Now, who is this, that thus sits in the midst of the throne of God, and is worshipped equally with him by all the holy armies

of heaven? If you remember the solemn declaration of God, I am the Lord, that is my name, and my praise will I not give to another, you must suppose that he to whom the Father thus commits the glory of creating, governing, redeeming and judging the world, and of sharing with him the throne and the praises of heaven, must be God himself; he must be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. Meanwhile, if there be any who are condemned, as guilty of idolatry, for worshipping and honoring the Son even as they honor the Father, let them comfort themselves with the reflection, that they are doing no more than is daily and hourly done in heaven, and no more than the rest of the children of God will do to all eternity.

Lastly: That Christ is God, is implicitly and expressly asserted in very many passages, both in the Old and New Testament. The Psalmist informs us, that the Israelites tempted the Most High God in the wilderness; but St. Paul, treating of the same subject, says, they tempted Christ. Christ, therefore, is the most high God. In our text, we find Thomas calling him, My Lord and my God; and the elders of Ephesus are charged to feed the flock of God, which he purchased with his own blood. St. Paul speaks of Christ, as God manifest in the flesh; as God over all, blessed forever, and as the only wise God our Saviour. In the epistle to the Hebrews, as if he foresaw that the time would come, when Christ would be considered as chief of the angels, he asks, To which of the angels said God at any time, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? Of his angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But, mark the difference; unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. To the same purpose the beloved disciple declares, that Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life; and that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And lest we should have any doubt who was intended by the Word, he adds, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. These high characters and titles of our Saviour, are perfectly agreeable to the prophecies which foretold his coming into the world. He shall be called, says one of the prophets, Immanuel, which is to say, God with us. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name

shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace; and of the increase of his government there shall be no end.

But perhaps some will pretend, that the word God is here used in an inferior sense, and that Jehovah, which the Jews called the incommunicable name of God, is never applied to our Saviour. In answer to this, it may be said, that the prophet, speaking of Christ, says, and His name shall be called Jehovah, our Righteousness. In the prophecy of Zechariah, Jehovah is introduced as saying, They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and mourn. If it be Jehovah who was pierced, then, beyond all controversy, Christ is Jehovah. So, in the same prophecy, Awake O sword, against the man who is my fellow, saith Jehovah. Now who is the man, where is the man, who can be the fellow, or as it might be rendered, the equal of Jehovah? Surely, it can be none but He, who was God and man united, even the man Christ Jesus. Once more; the prophet Isaiah tells us, that he saw in vision Jehovah, sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and surrounded by seraphims, who cried, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, and the whole earth is full of his glory. Yet St. John expressly assures us that it was Christ whom Isaiah then saw; consequently, Christ must be Jehovah sabaoth, or the Lord of Hosts. Now, collect together what has been said, and say whether the doctrine of our Saviour's proper divinity, could possibly have been more clearly taught in the word of God, than it is; whether it can now be expressed, in more full, forcible, intelligible terms, than it is expressed by the inspired writers. We may challenge any person who denies this doctrine, to tell how it could be asserted in plainer terms, or to find language more definite than has now been quoted from the sacred volume.

But perhaps you will be ready to ask, Since this great truth is so plainly taught in the word of God, how is it possible that it should ever be called in question? and how do those who oppose it support their cause? This is a very natural question, and to it we reply, that our Saviour's divinity never was called in question, for want of sufficient proof, but for want of a disposition to submit to sufficient proof. It was called in question, because we ignorant worms of the dust cannot understand it, and because our proud reason will not submit to believe God

himself, unless what he reveals is perfectly intelligible to our comprehension. It was called in question, because it is a maxim with the self-styled philosophers of the present day, that there should be no mysteries in religion, though the Apostle himself tells us, that, beyond all controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. If you ask what arguments can be brought against it by its opposers, I answer, they object,

1. That if Christ be God, there will be more than one supreme being, which is absurd; and that we make three Gods, to be one God, which is a contradiction. But this objection is founded upon a mistake. It supposes that we make three Gods, instead of three persons in one God. No one ever pretended that three persons were one person, or that three Gods were one God, but that three persons are one God. This is indeed above reason, but it is not contrary to reason; and if any one wishes to have it explained and understood, his wishes shall be gratified, when he will explain and understand God's eternity, his omniscience, his omnipresence, and his creative power; or even when he can explain how his own soul acts upon, and moves his body. If any one will meditate on these subjects, he will soon find they are as mysterious and unintelligible as the doctrine of three persons in one God. The truth is, every thing that respects God's existence, is and must be mysterious to finite creatures, because he is an infinite being, and as well might an insect hope to take in the universe at one glance of his eye, as we to comprehend the manner of God's existence; and should any one pretend to give us a revelation of God, which contained no mysteries, but was perfectly plain to our limited capacities, it would be a sufficient reason for rejecting it; for if we cannot comprehend ourselves, much less can we hope to comprehend God. But,

2. All the numerous passages, which assert that Christ was a man, are also marshalled in array to prove that he was not God, while in reality they are nothing to the purpose,—for those who assert that he was God, allow that he was also man in the strictest sense of the word. They believe that he was God manifest in the flesh, and that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The same may be said of those passages which are so triumphantly quoted in opposition to the doctrine

of our text, in which Christ declares, that he was inferior to his Father, that he knew not the period fixed for the day of judgment, that without his Father he could do nothing, and many others to the same purpose. We fully believe all this: We believe that, considered as the Son of man, as Mediator, he was inferior to the Father, and knew not the times appointed; but we also believe, with the apostle, that he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, and that in him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The truth is, that all the pretended arguments, which are usually alleged to disprove our Saviour's divinity, prove just nothing at all, or at least nothing to the purpose. They only prove, what all allow, that Christ, in one sense, was a man and inferior to the Father. Indeed, in one sense they rather prove, that he was a divine person; as for instance, where he says, The Father is greater than I. Now suppose any being but God to say this; suppose a man, an angel, or a super-angelic being saying, God is greater than I,—and consider how absurd such a speech would appear.

Now of the things we have spoken, this is the sum. There are plain intimations in the Old, and positive assertions in the New Testament, that there is more than one person in the Godhead, co-equal and co-eternal. When Christ came on earth, he gave great reason to suppose that he claimed divine honors as one of these persons; and for this claim he was put to death without renouncing it. He was worshipped, both on earth and in heaven, by angels, men and devils, and all the attributes, perfections, names, and works of God, are ascribed to him, at least as often as they are to the Father. If this does not prove him to be truly and essentially God, nothing can prove it. Consider then what has been said, and the Lord give us understanding in all things. I close with a brief application.

Let none imagine that they truly believe in Christ, merely because they profess to believe that Christ is God; for even the devils themselves believed this, and trembled at the belief. It is one thing to assent to this with our understanding, and another to consent to it with our wills, and embrace it in our hearts. The apostle informs us, that no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. It is evident he did not mean by this, that none could say these words,—Jesus is Lord,—without divine assistance. But he meant that no one could cordially consent

to, and embrace the proposition contained in these words, without being enlightened by the divine Spirit. He meant that no one could say from the heart, that Jesus is God, without being divinely taught. Consequently it is evident, that those who deny that Jesus is Lord, have not the Holy Ghost. They are not led by the Spirit of God, and therefore are not his children. They have not the spirit of Christ, and therefore are none of his, and the same must be said of those, who have only a speculative belief of this truth. It is not only a rational, but a cordial conviction, which is necessary; it is not with the head, says the apostle, but with the heart, that man believeth unto righteousness. Now every true Christian has this cordial belief. He has had such a sight and sense of his own guilty, lost condition, that he sees and feels, that nothing short of an infinite, almighty Saviour will suffice to save him; he feels that he cannot trust to any creature however exalted; he cannot put confidence in an arm of flesh; he cannot trust in any thing less than God. And by the enlightening influences of the divine Spirit, he is made to see that Christ is God, that he is an almighty and all-sufficient Saviour, just such a Saviour as his perishing soul requires. Then, and not till then, he can say, Jesus is Lord; then he can believe and trust in him for salvation; then he can say with the apostle, I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day.

On the contrary, he who never has been truly convinced of sin, who has never seen the guilt he has contracted, and the depravity of his nature, feels no need of an almighty Saviour; he has never been enabled to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; he has never believed in him so as to rejoice with joy unspeakable; and consequently he cannot say from the heart, that Jesus is Lord. Not being able to say this, he cannot have that true faith, which works by love. Not having faith, he cannot perform any good works acceptable to God; for without faith it is impossible to please God; and not being able to please God, he cannot be accepted of him. If then, my friends, you would perform truly good works; if you would have true justifying faith, by which you may serve God acceptably; if you would be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ, let it be your chief concern to obtain such conceptions of his character as shall lead you cordially to say with Thomas, My Lord and my

SERMON LII.

TITLES OF CHRIST.

Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. ISAIAH IX. 6, 7.

IN the preceding context the prophet, "rapt into future times" by the spirit of prophecy, and influenced by that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, not only foretells the incarnation of Christ, but speaks of that glorious event and of its happy consequences, as having already taken place: The people that walked in darkness, says he, have seen a great light. They that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. They joy before thee according to the joy of harvest; they rejoice as when they divide the spoil. But whence did all this light and joy proceed? I answer; the Sun of righteousness had arisen upon them with healing in his beams; for, says the prophet, unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. That the wonderful child, whose birth is announced and celebrated in these triumphant strains, was no other than Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, it is needless to remark. And as this is the day which has been considered by many, as the anniversary of his birth, it may not be improper to employ the time allotted to this discourse,

in meditating on an event, which is no less interesting to us, than it was to the ancient church, for unto us, as well as to them, this child is born; unto us, as well as to them, this son is given.

It may however be necessary, to remind you, that, if you wish to derive the smallest advantage from meditating on this passage, you must be in the exercise of a strong, and lively faith. You must sit at the feet of God, with the temper of a little child, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls; remembering that your minds are blinded and prejudiced against the truth, by the influence of sin; and, that what appears impossible to you, is possible with God; that what is, in your view, an absurd and unintelligible mystery, may be, in his sight, perfectly plain and intelligible. In a word, you must have the temper which the wise men of the east, the shepherds of Bethlehem, and the aged Simeon possessed. They were told, that Christ the Lord, the king of the Jews, the Saviour of men, was born; and when they hastened to see him, they found nothing but a helpless infant, born of obscure and indigent parents, and lying in a manger. Yet instead of making cavils and objections, as their own prejudiced understandings would have led them to do, they believed and worshipped.

Such is the wonderful power of faith. Thus does it triumph over every obstacle, and implicitly receive the word of God, however strange and incomprehensible it may appear. My friends, we warn you before hand, that if you do not exercise this faith, the present discourse will do you no good. You will say, it is impossible that a child born of a woman, can be properly called the mighty God, the everlasting Father. Thus the Saviour who is precious to them that believe, will be to you a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, as he was to the unbelieving Jews; and his gospel, which is to them that are saved, the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation, will appear in your view nothing but foolishness. O then, my hearers, if you wish to be saved, if you would not have the preaching of the cross prove a savor of death unto death, if you wish to profit by the glorious truths revealed in our text, pray fervently that God will increase your faith; and if you find unbelief prevailing, cry to God like the Jewish ruler, Lord, we would believe, help thou our unbelief.

This being premised, let us now proceed to consider the names

and titles of this wonderful child, whose birth is foretold in our text; whose birth Christians in different parts of the world, this day celebrate.

1. Our text informs us that this child shall be called Wonderful.

In the book of Judges, we read that, when Manoah inquired the name of an angel of the Lord who appeared to him, the angel replied, why dost thou ask after my name, seeing it is secret? The word there rendered secret, is the same which is here rendered wonderful. It was doubtless the Eternal Word, who is frequently called the Angel of the Covenant, that appeared on that occasion. The name which is here given him, signifies secret, mysterious, wonderful; and in each of these senses, it may properly be ascribed to Christ. He may be called secret, hidden, unknown; for we are told that no one knoweth the Son, save the Father. He may be called mysterious; for without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh. Even the angels are represented as desiring to look into it. He may also justly be called wonderful; for his person, his character, his office, his birth, his life, his death and resurrection, are all full of wonders. His person is wonderful; for he is Immanuel, God with us, and in him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily. His character is wonderful; for it comprises every thing that is excellent in the divine and human natures. His love is wonderful; for it passes knowledge. The riches of his grace are wonderful; for they are represented as being unsearchable. His birth is wonderful; for what can be more astonishing than that the eternal Word, who was with God, and who was God, and by whom all things were made, should be born of a woman, a weak and helpless infant. His life is wonderful; for it shews us God dwelling in flesh as a man; it shews us the great Lawgiver obeying his own laws; it shews us one who was in outward appearance, nothing but a poor, despised mechanic, controlling the laws of nature, commanding the elements as his servants, banishing demons with a will, a word, and forcing death and the grave to yield up their prey. His death was wonderful; for we there see the Lord of life and glory, dying by the hands of his creatures; we see the Giver of the law, bearing the curse of the law; we see the most innocent and perfect of beings, the delight of heaven and the ruler of

earth, treated both by heaven and earth, as the vilest of malefactors. His resurrection was wonderful; for what can be more so, than to see a dead person, having power to take his life again, bursting the fetters of death and the bars of the grave, ascending from the depths of the tomb, to the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high. These are but a part of the wonders which accompanied this wonderful child, but they are surely sufficient to show the propriety of the name given him in our text.

2. In the next place, we are told that the name of this child shall be called Counsellor. This name is also with strict propriety given to Christ. He is a counsellor, with respect both to God and to men. In the first place, he is a counsellor with respect to God. He is called the word and the wisdom of God; and with him the Father takes sweet counsel in reference to all his works. He consulted him with respect to the work of creation. Let us make man says he, in our image, after our likeness. He consulteth him respecting his works of providence. Let us drive out the man from the garden of Eden; let us go down and confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. He consulted him respecting the great work of grace, the plan of redemption. Speaking of the man whose name is the Branch, the prophet says, The counsel of peace shall be between them both; that is, between this man and Jehovah. Thus clearly does it appear, Christ our Immanuel is Jehovah's Counsellor. Hence we find him saying, counsel is mine, and sound wisdom, I am understanding, I have strength. Hence also the apostle informs us, that in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

In the second place, Christ is a counsellor with respect to men. He is the great teacher, guide and counsellor of his people; the light of the world, the Sun of righteousness. He that believeth in me, says he, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life; for I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light, and crooked things straight, before them; these things will I do, and not forsake them. He is also the great Advocate of his people, who pleads their cause for them in the court of heaven, and intercedes continually for the pardon of their sins, and the supply of their temporal and spiritual

necessities; for, says the apostle, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous.

3. The prophet informs us that the child whose birth he predicts, shall be called the Mighty God. On this awful name, my hearers, it is needless to insist. You are already acquainted with its import. It represents Christ, not only as God, but the mighty God. We shall only add a few of the passages which show that the prediction was fulfilled, that this name was given to Christ. St. John informs us, that the word was with God, and was God; that Christ is the true God and eternal life. Thomas, one of the disciples, calls him, my Lord, and my God. St. Paul, speaking of the Jews, says, of them as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. He also informs us that he is mighty, or able to save, even to the uttermost. Whether therefore you believe or not, that Christ is the mighty God, you must allow that he is called so, by divinely inspired prophets and apostles, who were commissioned to communicate to us every thing necessary to make us wise unto salvation, and who neither would, nor could deceive us. Whatever others may choose to think of Christ, to Christians he is the mighty God, and hereafter, when every eye beholds him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, they will joyfully cry, while others weep and despair, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. Even so Lord Jesus, come quickly.

4. This wonderful child shall be called the Everlasting Father, or the Father of eternity. Here again human reason will be ready to cry, we have already had enough, and more than enough of absurdity and contradictions. How can a child just born, be a Father, or everlasting Father, the Father of eternity? My friends, if you cannot answer this question, I suspect you would have been equally embarrassed with the question which our Saviour proposed to the Pharisees: How can David's son, be David's Lord? This question they could not answer; nor can any answer it, at the present day, in a satisfactory manner, who do not believe that Jesus Christ was God and man united. But those who believe this, can answer it with ease. They can reply, as God, Christ was David's Lord. As man, he was David's son. In another place Christ says, I am the root and the

offspring, or branch of David; the root whence David sprung, and the branch which sprung from David. So in our text. As man, he was a child born; as God, he was the Father of eternity. But there is still another, and very important sense, in which he may be called the everlasting Father, with reference to his divinity and humanity united. He, we are told, is the second Adam; that is, he is the covenant Lord and the spiritual Father of all his people, as Adam was the covenant Lord and natural Father of the human race. All the true people of Christ, the real subjects of the kingdom of heaven, have been born again; born into another family, and are heirs of a heavenly inheritance. Of this new birth Christ is the author, and therefore he is in a spiritual sense the Father, the ever living Father of the whole church in heaven and on earth. Hence the apostle represents him as the author or Father of eternal salvation. In the counsel, or purpose of God, he was from eternity the Father of his people; for he is represented as saying to them, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. And as his love and his relation to his people were from everlasting, so they will continue to everlasting. With the utmost propriety, therefore, may he who was born of a woman, be called the everlasting Father.

5. The last title here given to this mysterious child, is the Prince of Peace. That our Saviour is a prince or king, the Scriptures every where inform us. Why he is called the Prince of Peace, it is easy to conceive. He is the author of reconciliation, and consequently of peace, between an offended God, and offending man. His kingdom, as established in the heart, consists in righteousness, and peace, and holy joy. His atoning blood speaks peace to the guilty, terrified conscience. He dispenses peace to his people in a sovereign way; his commands enjoin perfect peace and love between man and man, and his religion restores peace and rest to the tumultuous, agitated, distracted soul, by uniting its jarring powers and faculties to fear his name. Well, therefore, may he be called the Prince of Peace.

Having thus briefly considered the names and titles of this wondrous child, we proceed to consider,

II. For whom he was born. My friends, it was for mankind, for us. Unto *us* this child is born, unto *us* this Son is given.

It has been observed, that when angels announced his birth to men, they said, Unto *you* is born a Saviour. But when prophets, when men speak of this event, they say unto *us* a child is born; for Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Unto us also a Son is given. A Son of whom? His birth shows him to be the Son of man. His titles, which we have already considered, and his works declare him to be the Son of God. He was both; and he was given to us both by his Father and by himself. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman. Christ loved us and gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Nor was he given to us only that he might suffer and die for our redemption; for the apostle farther observes, that God gave him to be head over all things unto his church. This leads us to consider a

3. Prerogative, which is predicted in our text respecting this child, viz. that the government shall be upon his shoulder.

In the Revelation the church is figuratively represented under the similitude of a woman, and this woman is represented as bringing forth a man child, who should rule all nations with a rod of iron. The same may be said of the child whose birth is foretold in our text. All power is committed to him in heaven and on earth; and God's language respecting him is, I have set my King on my holy hill of Zion. I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. The establishment and unbounded extent of this kingdom, are clearly predicted, and described in the prophecy of Daniel. In the days of these kings, says he, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; but it shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Of this kingdom, our Saviour, who was born as a child and given us as a son, is appointed Sovereign, and hence he is styled the King of Kings, and the Lord of lords. This kingdom, which is usually styled Christ's mediatorial kingdom, includes all beings in heaven and hell, who will all, either willingly or by constraint, finally submit to Christ; for God has sworn by him-

self, that to Christ every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess him Lord. Agreeably, we see that even the devils were subject to him while on earth, and even to his disciples, through his name, and that they were constrained, once and again, to prostrate themselves before him, and to confess that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. In a similar manner will all wicked men and wicked spirits be compelled reluctantly to prostrate themselves before him, and confess him Lord at the judgment day; for we are told, that he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. Agreeably, our text informs us, that of the increase of his government there will be no end. He will go on conquering and to conquer, overturning heathen temples with their idol gods, until the trumpet of the seventh angel sounds. Then the mystery of God will be finished, and great voices will be heard in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

But in addition to this mediatorial kingdom of Christ, which is set up in the world, he has another kingdom, the kingdom of his grace, which is set up in the hearts of his people. Here Christ reigns supreme, enthroned in the soul, casting down proud imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of himself. This kingdom consists in righteousness and peace and holy joy, and of the increase of this kingdom also, and of the peace which accompanies it, there shall be no end. This kingdom is compared to leaven hid in meal till the whole be leavened. Thus effectually and imperceptibly, shall the gracious power of Christ work in the hearts of his people, till the whole soul feels its influence, and is transformed into the image of Christ; for he will perfect that which concerneth us; he will not leave unfinished the work of his own hands. Their peace shall be as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea. Even in heaven there shall be no end to the increase of their happiness; but their perpetually expanding souls shall be made capable through eternity of receiving larger and larger measures of glory and felicity, and shall be continually filled by Him in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead. Thus of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end.

Application. Is it true, that unto our sinful race a child is born, to whom belong the wonderful names mentioned in our text, and to whom the salvation and the government of the world is committed? Surely then, my friends, it becomes us to rejoice, and to commemorate this all-important event with the most lively emotions of thankfulness and praise. In this offering all mankind are called upon to join, since the gift is to the whole race of men; for all people, and nations, and tongues, and languages, may cry, Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. And the song commenced in one part of the earth at the dawn of this day, ought to be echoed round the world as the same day dawns successively on its different climes. Even the blessed spirits of the just made perfect in heaven, may be considered as rejoicing in the birth of the great Deliverer, who redeemed them from worse than Egyptian bondage, brought them into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God, and finally raised them to the blissful mansions which they now inhabit, and where the increase of their happiness will never end. Nay more, the blessed angels themselves, who sang glory to God in the highest, when they announced the Saviour's birth, may be considered as repeating the same song. Let it give intensity to our joy, that we may now celebrate his birth and his resurrection at once.

And are there any in whose breasts these great events excite no joy; any who feel no interest in those things which excite, justly excite so deep an interest in all holy beings in heaven and on earth? Are there any who, instead of receiving with adoring wonder the great mysteries of Godliness, which we have been considering, regard them with indifference, or reject them as foolish? How plain is it they are entirely destitute of the temper of saints and angels; that they have never embraced Christ as their Saviour, and that they have neither part nor lot in his salvation. They cannot say, Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; for

they reject him. My friends, is this the case with any of you? Consider a moment your awful situation. That Saviour who is precious to others, has in your eyes no beauty that you should desire him. He who is to others the author of eternal salvation, is to you only a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; a savor of death unto death, and not of life unto life. Will you still remain in this awful situation? If not, be persuaded to accept the Saviour without delay. Remember that in order to make a gift your own, two things are necessary. It must first be offered. It must next be accepted. Unless it is accepted, it is not yours. Unless you accept Christ therefore, you have no Saviour, no Advocate in heaven. Come then, accept him as he is offered. Admire him as Wonderful; consult him as Counsellor; adore him as God; be born of him as your everlasting Father; and submit to him as the Prince of Peace. Possessed of all these titles, he offers himself to you, and in return he asks only for your heart. Come then, sinner, be persuaded to accept him. As on the birth-day of your friends, you present them gifts as tokens of your affection, so come now, on this birth-day of the Saviour, and present yourself to him, who is ready and anxious to become your almighty, everlasting friend, in return for your submission, love and gratitude. This is the gift he most desires, this is the only return he asks for his boundless and innumerable mercies. Come then at this propitious moment, present yourself unto him, accept him as your Redeemer, and then you shall be of the number of those who can say, Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

SERMON LIII.

CHRIST'S JOY IN THE CHURCH BEFORE HIS INCARNATION.

Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.—PROVERBS VIII. 31.

THIS chapter contains an authoritative and affectionate address to mankind, uttered by a speaker who is called Wisdom. It is evident from the language of this speaker, and from the description which he gives of himself, that he is a real, and not an allegorical personage: "I love them," he says, "that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me; but pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth was. When Jehovah prepared the heavens I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the abyss; when he established the clouds above; when he appointed the foundations of the earth; then was I by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men."

No attentive reader of the New Testament need be reminded how strikingly this language corresponds with what is revealed respecting the Word, who was in the beginning with God; who is in the bosom of the Father; of whom the Father said, this is

my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, and who was made flesh and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Expositors are therefore doubtless right in saying, as they generally have done, that it is the eternal Word, or the divine nature of Christ, who speaks in this chapter, in the character of Wisdom. In the passage selected for our text, this divine personage gives us an interesting account of his feelings and employments previous to his appearance in the flesh: I was continually rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men. This, my hearers, is a very remarkable passage. Our Saviour, the eternal Word, informs us, that, as soon as the world was made, the habitable parts of it, or the parts inhabited by men, became the scene and subject of his rejoicing; and that his delights (the expression is emphatical, denoting his chief delight) were with the sons of men.

But had he not a heaven in which he might rejoice? Had he not myriads of holy angels in whose society and praises he might delight? He had; and yet it appears that he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, rather than in heaven; that his chief delights were with men, rather than angels.

This, surely, is not a little surprising; and what renders it more so, is, that he knew the world in which he thus rejoiced would be wet with his tears, and stained with his blood. He knew that the fallen race in which he thus delighted, were enemies to his Father and to himself; and that they would requite his love with the basest ingratitude, put him to a cruel and ignominious death, and persecute his friends with fire and sword. Why then should he rejoice in our earth, and delight in its human inhabitants? It could not be simply because he created them, for he also created heaven and the angelic spirits. It could not be on account of man's intellectual worth and dignity; for in those respects the angels are greatly our superiors. Still less can we ascribe it to any moral excellence possessed by men; for, as has already been observed, they are fallen, sinful creatures. We must, therefore, look elsewhere for the reasons of the feelings and conduct here described; and we shall find them in the plan of redemption. In the world, that plan was to be executed, and men were the objects of it.

This, generally speaking, was the reason why the eternal

Word rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and why his chief delights were with the sons of men. To be more particular, He rejoiced in the world, rather than in heaven,

I. Because it was destined to be the place in which he should perform the most wonderful of his works, obtain the greatest victory, make the most glorious display of his moral perfections, especially of his love, which is the essence of them all; and in the most signal manner glorify his Father. All this he was to do, all this he since has done, in effecting the work of redemption.

We know but little of the work which he has performed in heaven. We know still less of what he may have done in the numberless worlds which appear around us. But we may venture to assert that, whatever he may have done in heaven, or in other parts of the universe, he has never performed any work so great, so wonderful, so glorious to the Father and himself, and so productive of happiness, as the work of redemption.

We are warranted to make this assertion by the declaration of Jehovah, who represents the work of redeeming love, as, of all his works, the most wonderful. We are warranted to make it by the fact that the blessed angels, who must be supposed to know what works he has performed, regard this as the most glorious of all his works, as the work into which they especially desire to look, and which is the most worthy of their admiration.

It is the work which in a peculiar manner calls forth the praises of heaven. It is the performance of this work which, in the view of the inhabitants of heaven, renders the Lamb who was slain peculiarly worthy to receive blessing, and glory, and honor, and power.

Well, then, might our divine Redeemer rejoice in the world where the greatest of his works was to be performed. He had from eternity rejoiced in the plan of it, and in contemplating its execution. Still more, were it possible, would he rejoice to see the world which was to be the scene of its performance, start from nothing into existence; to see preparation then making for the great work, and to mark the several parts of the earth in which the principal events connected with it would take place.

II. Our divine Redeemer rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, because they were the destined residence of his then future

church. Christ loved the church, says an apostle, and gave himself for it. He gave himself for it because he loved it; loved it before it had a being. He calls the things which are not, we are told, as though they were. He could love the church before it was created, no less easily then than he can love it now. Agreeably, he says to it, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, that is with a love that has existed from eternity; therefore with loving kindness will I gather thee.

In consequence of this everlasting love to his church, he rejoiced in the world which was to be its residence, while preparing for heaven, rejoiced to visit it, as we are pleased to visit the habitations of our children or friends. For this reason he rejoiced in all the habitable parts of the earth; for they are all destined to be filled with his disciples. Every where churches are to be established. And to his omniscient eye, which saw the end from the beginning, every habitable spot on earth was made to appear interesting by some event connected with his church, of which it was to be the scene. As he walked invisibly through the world, immediately after its creation, he would say: Here the first martyr will seal the cause of truth with his blood. From this spot, Enoch, and from that, Elijah, shall be translated to heaven. Here Abraham shall pitch his tent, and build his altar, and rejoice in my gracious visits. There I will conduct my people through the wilderness; on that mount I will appear, to give them my law; at its foot, I will meet my servant Moses, and converse with him, face to face, as a man talketh with his friend. And while he thus marked the future scenes of all the great events in the history of his church, innumerable other places would be rendered pleasing to him by the foresight of less important, indeed, but still highly interesting events. Here, he might say, some trembling penitent will begin to find relief in prayer. There, I will first reveal myself to some broken-hearted sinner, and listen to the joyful praises and thanksgivings which he will in consequence pour forth. On this spot, one of my ministering servants shall preach my gospel with power and success; and on that, a temple shall rise, where many shall be taught to know and love me; where a numerous church shall be trained up for heaven, where I will often meet and commune with them at my table.

In this part of the world, also, though destined to remain

long uninhabited, and destitute of the gospel, he rejoiced. He saw all the temples which now adorn our land, all the churches which he here established. Nor did this house of God, or this church escape his notice. He knew of whom it would be said, this man was born to glory there. He saw this day, saw you, my Christian friends, listening to these truths, and meeting around his table; entered every spot where you or any of his people would reside; where habitations would be erected, in which prayer would be offered up in his name. He not only saw all his churches that now exist, but all that will exist hereafter. He saw the Ethiopian stretch out his hands to God, and the isles waiting for his law. He saw the Jews coming in with the fulness of the Gentiles; he saw the whole earth filled with the glory of God, as the waters fill the sea. All this he saw, for he enabled his prophets to predict it. And while he saw this, he heard all the prayers and praises which would be uttered by his people, in all ages and parts of the world, so that the whole earth, immediately after its creation, while all was solitary and still, resounded to his ear with praises, thanksgivings, and songs of joy. Is it then strange, that, seeing and hearing this, he should rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, even more than in heaven; in heaven, which, if I may venture to say it, would appear comparatively empty, till his beloved people were brought in to share it with him.

III. While our divine Redeemer thus rejoiced in our world, rather than in heaven, his chief delights and pleasures were with men, rather than with angels. They were so,

1. Because he intended, in the fulness of time, to assume our nature, and become himself a man. He is called the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world; because before the world was created, it was determined and foreseen that he should be slain. For the same reason, he may be said to have been a man, before the foundation of the world; because it was determined that he should become so; that he should be made flesh and dwell among us. In consequence of this, he felt, if I may so express it, related to man; felt that he was their brother, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh,—feelings which he could not, with equal reason, exercise towards angels. A heathen writer represents one as saying, I am a man, and therefore cannot but feel interested in any thing which relates to

2. To great numbers of our race the divine Redeemer was destined to become still more nearly related. They had even then been given to him by his Father, and were appointed to compose his church, to be united to him in the most intimate and indissoluble of relations; for the church is styled his body, a body of which he was the constituted head, of which his Spirit is the animating soul. Hence the apostle, speaking of Christ, says, we are members of Christ's body, of his flesh and of his bones; and he loves and cherishes the church, even as a man loveth and cherisheth his own flesh. The union between Christ and his church is to be eternal. Its members are destined to share heaven with him, to live and reign with him for ever and ever. All this he knew from the beginning. He knew also that his church would, in process of time, return his love; that all its members would love and praise him through eternity, as their deliverer from everlasting death, and the source of all their felicity. Hence he felt himself drawn to them by a most powerful attraction, and hence his chief delights were with the race from which his church was to be selected, and among which some of its members were in all ages to be found.

3. Another reason why his chief delights were with the sons of men, may be found in the disposition which prompted him to say, It is more blessed to give than to receive. In heaven, he could receive the praises of angels, but on earth he could give gifts to men. He could here exercise pardoning mercy, and dispense spiritual blessings to his people. This he began to do at least as early as the time of Abel, and he continued to do it until the period of his resurrection. During all that time he was delightedly employed in instructing, protecting, and blessing the church which he was afterwards to purchase with his blood; and in making preparation for his visible appearance on earth. It was the Spirit of Christ, as St. Peter informs us, which inspired Noah to preach to the inhabitants of the old world, and the prophets to foretell his own incarnation, death and resurrection.

From a comparison between different parts of the Scriptures, it appears that it was he who appeared to the patriarchs who commissioned Moses, who led Israel through the wilderness, who dwelt in the Jewish temple, who said of Zion, This is my rest forever, here will I dwell, because I have desired it. We

need not wonder, then, that one who feels more happiness in giving than in receiving, should delight in visiting the sons of men, whom he could thus pardon and bless, and save, rather than in dwelling with angels, who needed no pardon or salvation; or that he should rejoice more over one sinner that repenteth, than over many of the inhabitants of heaven who needed no repentance. It would be easy to enlarge on these and various other considerations of a similar nature; but leaving you to do this in your private meditation, I proceed to make some improvement of the subject.

And, first: How ungrateful and inexcusable does the treatment which Christ has received from men appear, when viewed in the light of this subject. He chose our world in preference to all the worlds around us, to be the scene of the most glorious of his works, and our race to be the subjects of it. No sooner was the earth formed, than he rejoiced in it, and chose to dwell in it rather than in heaven. No sooner were men created than he made it his supreme delight to visit and bless them, preferring their society to that of the holy angels. When part of the angels sinned and fell, he did not assume their nature, or offer himself a sacrifice for their salvation. He took not on him, says the apostle, the nature of angels, but he took upon him the seed of Abraham. Yet when, after the lapse of four thousand years, this friend of man, this divine philanthropist assumed our nature, and visited the world which he had loved, in human flesh, how was he treated? He was in the world, and the world was made by him, but it acknowledged him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. Poverty, contempt, the crown of thorns, and the cross, were all which he received from the world in which he had so long rejoiced, from the ungrateful race in whom he had so long delighted. And we, my friends, though we condemn his murderers, treat him little better. We disbelieve him, disobey him, slight him, refuse to comply with his invitations, neglect his offered mercy and grace, and grieve him in a thousand different ways. Even in the house of his friends he is often wounded and crucified afresh. Surely those of our race who finally reject such a Saviour, will be as much distinguished by the severity of their punishment, as they have been by the greatness of their privileges and mercies.

Again: Did our Saviour, before his incarnation, rejoice in the habitable parts of our earth, and delight in visiting and blessing the sons of men? Then we may be certain that he still does so; for he is, yesterday, to-day, and forever, the same. Still he prefers earth to heaven; still his chief delights are with the sons of men; and while, as man, he intercedes for them in heaven, he still, as God, visits our world, to meet with and bless his people; for his language is, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them to bless them. I will come to every one that loves me and take up my abode with him. I am he that walketh in the midst of the churches. And while he thus addresses his people, he says to sinners, Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

My hearers, shall we not all return, and love and serve this condescending, long tried, and unalterable friend, who has for so many ages rejoiced, who still rejoices in our world, and delights in doing us good? Shall we any more grieve and offend him by our neglect, or by indulging those sins which caused his death? Shall not we, my christian friends, who expect to meet him at his table, yield ourselves wholly up to him without reserve, subdued by his all-conquering love, and constrained by his grace to live henceforth, not unto ourselves, but to him who has so long loved us, who died for us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood? Surely, if he rejoices in our world the whole world ought to rejoice in him; if his delights are with the sons of men, surely the sons of men ought all to place their happiness in being with him.

Lastly: How great, how inconceivable will be our Saviour's happiness, after the final consummation of all things! Then the plan for which our world was formed, will be completed. Then every member of his church, for the sake of which he loved and visited our race, will have been brought home to heaven, to be with him where he is; and if he loved and rejoiced and delighted in them before they knew and loved him, how will he love and rejoice in them, when he sees them surrounding his throne, perfectly resembling himself, in body and soul, loving him with unutterable love, contemplating him with ineffable

delight, and praising him as their deliverer from sin, and death, and hell, as the author of all their everlasting glory and felicity. Then, O blessed, animating thought! then he will be amply rewarded for all his sufferings, and for all his love to our ruined race. Then his people shall cease to grieve and offend him; then they will no longer degrade him by weak, confused, inadequate conceptions of his person, character and work; for then they shall see as they are seen, and know as they are known. Then the whole church shall be presented to him a glorious church, without spot, or blemish, or imperfection, and shall be as a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and as a royal diadem in the hand of our God. Then, O Zion, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. Then thy sun shall no more go down, nor thy moon withdraw itself; but the Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory; and the days of thy mourning, and of thy Saviour's sufferings shall be ended.

SERMON LIV.

CHRIST'S PRIESTLY OFFICE.

Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum; We have such an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. — HEBREWS VIII. 1—3.

AN apostle informs us, that the Levitical law, with its tabernacle, its priesthood, its altars, and its sacrifices, was a shadow of good things to come; but that the body, or substance of which they were a shadow, was Christ. In other words, they resembled Christ, just as a shadow resembles the body which projects it. They exhibited a kind of outline of his person, character, offices and work. This truth is stated and illustrated at considerable length in the preceding chapters. In our text the apostle gives a brief summary of his statements respecting it: Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is necessary that this man have somewhat also to offer.

That we may understand the import of this passage, it is necessary to recollect, that the three principal things under the Mosaic dispensation, were the tabernacle, the priests, and the

sacrifices. On these every thing else depended. Take away these and nothing valuable was left. Now in our text the apostle intimates, that each of these three things was a type of Christ; or that he is to his people, under the Christian dispensation, what the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the sacrifices were to the Jews. He is our tabernacle, our high priest, and our atoning sacrifice. Each of these assertions we propose to illustrate.

1. Jesus Christ is the Christian's tabernacle, or he is to his people, what the tabernacle was to the Jews. The true tabernacle, of which the apostle here speaks, and which he informs us the Lord pitched, and not man, was the body, or human nature of Christ. The Jewish tabernacle, was pitched by men. But the body of Christ was prepared by God. He says himself to his Father, A body hast thou prepared me. And he said to the Jews, during his residence on earth, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again. But, adds the inspired penman, he spoke of the temple of his body. Now the temple, as you are doubtless aware, was of the same nature, and designed to answer the same purposes as the tabernacle, and differed from it only in being more permanent and substantial. Calling his body the temple, was therefore the same as calling it the tabernacle. By calling his body, the true tabernacle, the apostle intimates that the Jewish tabernacle was not the true one, but only a shadow or type of it. That he gives it this appellation with perfect propriety, a moment's reflection will convince us. The Jewish tabernacle was the only place on earth where God dwelt in a peculiar manner; the only place where he was accessible; the only place where he could be found; the only place where he could be approached on a mercy-seat; the only place where he answered the inquiries of his worshippers; the only place where offerings could be acceptably presented him. Hence the pious Jews, whenever they prayed, turned their faces towards the tabernacle, and afterwards towards the temple; and they addressed their prayers to Jehovah, as to him that dwelt between the cherubim, that is the cherubim which overshadowed the mercy-seat in the most holy place.

Now in all these respects the tabernacle was a type of Christ. In all these respects, his body or human nature is the true tabernacle. In him alone God dwells; for in him dwelleth all the

fulness of the Godhead bodily. God can be found, he can be approached acceptably, nowhere else; for through Jesus Christ, says an apostle, we have access to the Father, and in him alone are we accepted. As the tabernacle was the appointed meeting-place between God and the Jews, so Jesus Christ is the appointed meeting-place between God and sinners now. As the mercy-seat was in the tabernacle, so, an apostle informs us, Christ is set forth or exhibited as a mercy-seat through faith in his blood. They, and they only who come to God in Christ, will find him on a mercy-seat, or, in other words, find him ready to show mercy. There is salvation, says an apostle, and of course there is mercy, in no other. And as from the tabernacle, God communicated his will, so he now communicates it through Jesus Christ. He is the only true light. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and through him alone are they dispensed to mortals. As the Jews, when they prayed, turned their faces towards the tabernacle, so we are directed to pray in the name of Jesus Christ, looking to him by faith; and as Jehovah was then addressed, as one who dwelt between the Cherubim, so he is now to be addressed as the God who dwells in Christ. In fine, the substance of the gospel is, that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Well then may Jesus Christ, or his human nature, be called the true tabernacle.

2. Jesus Christ is the Christian's High Priest; or he is all that to his people which the Levitical priests were to the Jews. This is repeated again and again in the epistle before us. Now the office of the Jewish high priest is thus described by the apostle: Every high priest is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin. Accordingly we find that this service was assigned exclusively to the Jewish priests. They were, in an inferior sense, a kind of mediator between God and his worshippers. They only were allowed to approach him, and to offer up sacrifices. No other man, however holy or highly exalted, not even the most pious of the Jewish kings, was allowed to offer his own sacrifice, or to enter the sanctuary. Uzziah, in other respects a most exemplary monarch, was struck with leprosy, for only attempting to do it. Especially was it the work of the high priest to make an atonement for the sins of the nation once in a year, by offering up a sacrifice and carrying the blood into the most holy place,

and there sprinkling it before God. And not only the sin offerings, but all other offerings, were to be made by the priest alone. If one who had received any providential mercies brought a thank-offering to God, he was on no pretence allowed to present it himself, but the priest received it at his hand, carried it into the sanctuary and there presented it before the mercy-seat, to him who dwelt upon it.

In all these respects, the Jewish priests were most strikingly types of Christ, and he is, as the apostle styles him, the great High Priest of our profession. He is the one great Mediator between God and sinful men, and there is no access to God, either for our persons, our services, or our prayers, but through him, nor can they be accepted unless offered up by him. I, says he, am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me. Hence an apostle informs us, that the spiritual sacrifices which Christians offer up, are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ; and another apostle exhorts us, whatever we do, in word, or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to the Father by him. It is also his work and prerogative alone to make atonement for sin. The Jewish high priest made a typical atonement for the sins of the Jews only; but Christ, says an apostle, is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. And as the Jewish high priest, after offering a sacrifice for atonement, went into the most holy place, in behalf of the nation; and as their representative, so Christ, as the apostle informs us, has entered, not into holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for his people. And as at the hour of prayer the Jewish high priest offered up incense in the sanctuary, while the people stood praying without, that their prayers, and the smoke of the incense, might ascend together, so St. John in vision, saw Christ as the great angel of the New Covenant, offering up the prayers of all saints with much incense. It is owing to his merits and intercession alone, that the prayers of his people are accepted and answered; and he ever liveth to make intercession for them. The word "such" in our text refers to a previous description of what was necessary to qualify one for the office or work of our high priest. Such a high priest, says the apostle in the context, became us, or was necessary for us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and

made higher than the heavens. And such a high priest we have, one who is perfectly holy in heart, harmless in his conduct, and undefiled or unspotted by the pollutions of the world, and who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high. It appears, then, that every service which the Levitical priests typically performed for the Jews, Jesus Christ really performs for his people. Well then may he be styled and regarded as our great High Priest.

3. Jesus Christ is the true sacrifice of which the Jewish sacrifices were only types. This is intimated in that clause of our text which says, it was necessary that he also should have somewhat to offer. What he had to offer, what he did offer, we are informed in the context, as well as in many other places. He offered up himself, his body his blood, his life. He was, says an apostle, sacrificed, or offered up as a sacrifice, for us. On the nature and design of the Levitical sacrifices, and the benefits which the Jews derived from them, we have often dwelt, and with them you are, we presume, acquainted. You are aware, that as the apostle remarks, all things were under the law purified with blood, the blood of the sacrifices, and that without shedding of blood, there was no remission of sin. If an Israelite was betrayed into any sin in consequence of which his life was forfeited to the divine law, he was permitted to bring a lamb as a substitute to die in his stead; and if he brought it in the exercise of repentance and faith, to be offered up by the priests, it was accepted, he was forgiven, and his life spared. And it was by carrying the blood of the sacrifice into the holy place, and then sprinkling it before God, that atonement was invariably made for the sins of the nation. These sacrifices were however only typical; they had no efficacy in themselves to atone for sin. They owed all their efficacy to their reference or relation to the great, meritorious, and efficacious sacrifice which was made by Christ, when he offered up himself on the cross. By this offering, he made a real, and not a typical atonement for sin. In consequence of this offering, every penitent believer, is freely and fully forgiven. He is justified by the blood of the Lord Jesus. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. And as the blood of the sacrifice was presented and sprinkled before God in the most holy place, so Christ, says the apostle, not with the blood of bulls and of goats, but with

his own blood, entered in once into the holy place, or into heaven, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Hence in allusion to the Jewish sacrifices, his blood is called the blood of sprinkling. Thus it appears that Jesus Christ is the true tabernacle, the true priest, and the true sacrifice of which the Jewish tabernacle, priests, and sacrifices were only types, and that as such he procures for his people really all those blessings which these institutions procured in a typical manner only for the Jews.

I shall now proceed to make some improvement of these interesting and instructive truths.

1. From these truths, those who are tempted to despise or ridicule the Jewish rites and ceremonies, or to regard them as unworthy of divine appointment, may learn their error. Many, there is reason to fear, are guilty of this irreverence, and even some serious persons consider the whole Levitical law, as a very uninteresting portion of the Scriptures. But if any think it such it is owing solely to their own ignorance. The fact is, that this part of the Scriptures is full of Christ; and if properly understood, will assist greatly in obtaining a right understanding of his gospel, and of the way of salvation by him. Of this no one can doubt, who attends to the use which St. Paul makes of it in this epistle. And permit me here to beseech you all, my hearers, for your own sakes, not to despise any part of Scripture, because you do not understand it, or perceive its use. Surely reverence, humility, modesty, require us rather to suspect ourselves, than to censure the all-wise God. An apostle mentions some persons, who like natural brute beasts, made only to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of things which they understand not, that they shall utterly perish in their own corruption. If we would avoid their doom, let us beware how we imitate their conduct.

2. This subject furnishes one proof of the divine origin, and consequently, truth of the Scriptures, and it shows us how exactly the Old Testament and the New correspond. The Old Testament teaches by types and shadows, what the New more clearly reveals; yet the men who wrote them, lived many centuries apart. Must not the writers of the Old Testament then have been inspired? Could they ever have thought of devising such a complicated system of rites and ceremonies; a system too, which should so exactly shadow forth the character, offices

and works of a Saviour, who was not to make his appearance in the world till many ages after their death? It is impossible. He who can believe that they could do this, or that such a coincidence is the result of accident, may believe any thing.

3. Since God took care under the former dispensation, to shadow forth, in so many ways, the dwelling of the Godhead in Jesus Christ, his priesthood, sacrifice, atonement, and intercession, we have reason to believe that he regards these truths as fundamentally important. Nor is it strange that he thus regards them; for they compose the sum, the substance, the essence of the gospel. Take them away, and the gospel is gone. Take them away, and we have no way of access to God, no place in which we can find God, no pardon, no salvation. In a word, as the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the sacrifices, were all important in the old dispensation, so is Christ whom they represent, in the new. Those then who reject his divinity, atonement and intercession, who deny that he offered up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, reject the true gospel and give us another, which is a gospel in name only. This however many do. Some do it speculatively. A still greater number do it practically. As many of the Jews neglected the tabernacle, the priesthood and the sacrifices, which God had appointed, and built high places where they officiated as their own priests, and offered up their own sacrifices, so many nominal Christians neglect the priesthood, atonement, and intercession of Jesus Christ, come to God relying on their own merits, offer up their prayers in their own names, and hope to be saved by their own works and services. They justify themselves in their course by saying, so long as we worship and pray to the true God, it cannot be of much consequence in what manner we worship him. But the Jews might have said the same, respecting their high places. They might have said, we do not, like many of our countrymen, forsake the true God to follow idols. We still worship Jehovah alone, and offer our sacrifices to him, and we hope to be accepted, though we do not go up to the tabernacle and offer our sacrifices through the priest. But such hopes would have been groundless, such incense would not have been accepted. God would still have rejected and been displeased with their services, and the same may be said of the hopes, the incense, and the services of those who, instead of coming to

God, relying on his merits, and presenting their prayers and services in his name, come in their own names, and rely on their own merits. A curse, and not a blessing will be their reward.

4. The subject is full of instruction and consolation to the real disciples of Christ, and to all who are willing to accept of him as their Saviour. Let such persons consider, in the first place, what encouragement and consolation the tabernacle was suited to give the Jews. They might say to themselves, since God has caused it to be raised among us for his special residence, since he dwells in it on a mercy-seat, since he has told us where we may always find him, and since he is there ready to dispense pardon, instruction and favor, he must be willing that we should approach him, he must be willing to receive us, to hear our prayers, and to accept our offerings. We will therefore go to him with confidence. So we may say, since God dwells in our nature, in the man Christ Jesus; since he dwells there as a God of mercy and grace, and as a prayer-hearing God; since through him he dispenses pardon and light and strength and salvation, and since he has done all this on purpose to encourage us to come to him, we will come, we will trust in him; we will seek God in Jesus Christ, and neither expect to find, nor seek to find him, any where else.

Again, consider what encouragement and consolation the Jews might derive from the priesthood. They might say, we are too sinful, too much polluted, to approach a holy God with acceptance; but we are not therefore wholly shut out from him. He has appointed an order of men, to act as mediators between himself and us, to take our offerings and present them before him, and to burn incense in our behalf. Surely then, he is willing to admit us to some intercourse and communion with himself; he must be willing to accept our offerings, though worthless in themselves, when presented by his own appointed priest; we will therefore come, we will offer him our gifts and sacrifices, we will confidently hope for acceptance. Especially what an encouragement was it to them, at the hour of prayer, to see the priest enter the sanctuary by God's appointment to burn incense, while they stood praying without, and to see the cloud of smoke ascending upward from the golden altar. They might then say, though we are not permitted to enter the sanctuary ourselves, there is one appointed to enter it on our

behalf, and to burn incense for us. The smoke of that incense offered by his own appointment, God has declared to be of a sweet savor, and our prayers ascending with it to heaven, shall find acceptance and obtain answers of peace. So we may say, though we are sinners, children of disobedience, children of wrath; though we have wandered far from God, and our moral pollution renders us unfit to approach him, or pray to him, yet we are not excluded from him forever. He has provided a great High Priest and Mediator for us, in the person of his own Son, whom he always hears, who is infinitely worthy, and who is ever ready to receive and present to the Father, our petitions and requests. Though we are not, as yet, permitted to enter heaven, he has entered it on our behalf, as our forerunner and representative; and while we stand praying without, he intercedes for us within, and causes our prayers and services to come up with acceptance, perfumed as with a cloud of incense. Even at this moment we have an advocate, a powerful, prevailing advocate of God's own appointment, pleading for us at the right hand of his throne. Surely then, we may hope for acceptance through him; we will therefore pray, will hope confidently for an answer of peace. God never would, at such an expense, have provided such a high priest for us, had he not been willing and desirous that we should thus approach him.

Further, consider what comfort and encouragement a believing Jew might derive from the divine institution of sacrifices. Without such an institution, when he had once sinned, he would have felt he was undone forever. He would have said, my life is forfeited, my blood is demanded by the law which I have violated, and I can never redeem the forfeiture; nor can I hope that a holy, just, and true God will remit it. There is no hope, no escape for me. I must perish. But by appointing sacrifices, God did as it were say, No, sinner, there is hope; you need not perish, I have provided a remedy; bring a lamb without spot to be offered by my priests as a sacrifice, and I will accept it. Its life shall go for thy life, its blood for thy blood, and thou shalt be free. Just so, were it not for the atoning sacrifice of Christ, we as sinners could have no ground of hope, and a sinner convinced of his sin would entertain no hope, but sink down in utter despair. He would say, the language of God's law is, the soul that sinneth, it shall die. I have sinned, I must die, I

cannot hope that a holy, just, and true God will sacrifice his justice and holiness, give up the honor of his law and violate his word, for the sake of saving me, a miserable sinner. How can I dare ask him to do it? How can he hear me if I do? And even should I obey him hereafter, my life will still be forfeited for my past disobedience. There is no remedy, no way of escape. Hell must be my portion, there is nothing before me but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. But in the gospel of Christ, God does as it were say to such a sinner, No, sinner, thou needest not perish. Thou needest not go down to the pit, for I have found a ransom. My Son has offered up himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world. He has borne the curse of the law, and died, the just for the unjust, to make atonement for their sins. And now if, with penitence and faith, thou wilt trust in him, thou shalt be pardoned and saved for his sake. Surely this is gospel, this is good news indeed for sinners; and as such, every one who has proper views of God, of his law, and of his own sinfulness, will consider it.

Finally: How precious should the Lord Jesus Christ be, in our estimation! He is the tabernacle in which God dwells, the only place where we can find him. He is the Mediator, through whom alone we can come to God; the High Priest, who alone can present our prayers and services with acceptance; the atoning sacrifice, through which alone our sins can be forgiven. Surely then, he ought to be precious to us. To those of you who believe, he is precious. In your system of religion, in your hopes, he is all in all. But even you do not praise him by any means as you ought. Even you know not the thousandth part of his worth, his excellence. O seek and pray for more knowledge of him. Like Paul, count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. And while you come around this table, look up and see what a high priest, what an advocate you have to plead your cause in heaven. See that very Saviour, the symbols of whose body and blood you are about to receive, seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high, where he ever liveth to make intercession for his people. Is he worthy? then all who trust in him will be so regarded. Is he accepted? then the persons and services of all who believe in him are accepted. Will the Father hear him? then he will hear all who pray in his name. O then, Christian,

bless God for Jesus Christ, and take courage; and since we have a great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens, let us hold fast our profession, without wavering, and come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

SERMON LV.

CHRIST A MAN OF SORROWS.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. ISAIAH LIII. 3—7.

IN this chapter, my friends, we have a prophetic description of the character, life and sufferings of our Saviour. So full, so particular, and so clear is this description, so exactly does it correspond with the events which it foretells, that it seems to be a history rather than a prophecy; and had we not the most satisfactory evidence of its being penned some hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, we should be tempted to suspect that it was forged after his death, and that the writer only related the circumstances which he pretended to foretell. In that portion of this remarkable prophecy which has been read as our text, there are several particulars deserving of attention. A few remarks upon each of these particulars will compose the present discourse.

I. It is here predicted, that Christ should be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. That this prediction was literally fulfilled, no one, who has ever read the history of his sufferings, need be told. It may, however, be necessary here to correct a mistake, which has deprived this man of sorrows of much of that sympathy, which his unexampled sufferings would otherwise have excited. It has been supposed by many, that his sufferings were rather apparent than real; or at least, that his abundant consolations, and his knowledge of the happy consequences which would result from his death, rendered his sorrows comparatively light, and almost converted them to joys. But never was supposition more erroneous. Jesus Christ was as truly a man, as either of us, and, as man, he was as really susceptible of grief, as keenly alive to pain and reproach, and as much averse from shame and suffering, as any of the descendants of Adam. As to divine consolations and supports, they were at all times bestowed on him in a very sparing manner, and in the season of his greatest extremity entirely withheld; and though a knowledge of the happy consequences, which would result from his sufferings, rendered him willing to endure them, it did not, in the smallest degree, take off their edge, or render him insensible to pain. No, his sufferings, instead of being less, were incomparably greater than they appeared to be. No finite mind can conceive of their extent; nor was any of the human race ever so well entitled to the appellation of the *Man of Sorrows*, as the man Christ Jesus. His sufferings began with his birth, and ended but with his life.

In the first place, it must have been exceedingly painful to such a person as Christ, to live in a world like this. He was perfectly holy, harmless, and undefiled. Of course, he could not look on sin, but with the deepest abhorrence. It is that abominable thing which his soul hates. Yet during the whole period of his residence on earth, he was continually surrounded by it, and his feelings were every moment tortured with the hateful sight of human depravity. How much sorrow the sight occasioned him, we may in some measure learn from the bitter complaints which similar causes extorted from David, Jeremiah, and other ancient saints. They describe, in the most striking and pathetic language, the sufferings which they experienced from the prevalency of wickedness around them, and often

wished for death to relieve them from their sufferings. But the sufferings of Christ from this cause were incomparably greater than theirs. He was far more holy than they, his hatred of sin incomparably more intense, and the sight of it proportionably more painful. In consequence of his power of searching the heart, he saw unspeakably more sin in the world, than any mere man could discover. We can discover sin only when it displays itself in words and actions. But he saw all the hidden wickedness of the heart, the depths of that fountain of iniquity, from which all the bitter streams of vice and misery flow. Every man that approached him was transparent to his eye. In his best friends he saw more sin than we can discover in the most abandoned reprobates. He saw also, in a far clearer light than we can do, the dreadful consequences of sin, the interminable miseries to which it is conducting the sinner; and his feelings of compassion were not blunted by that selfish insensibility which enables us to bear with composure the sight of human distress. On the contrary, he was all sympathy, compassion, and love. He loved others as himself, and therefore felt for the sufferings of others as for his own. If Paul could say, who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? much more might Christ. In this, as well as in a still more important sense, he took upon himself our griefs, and bore our sorrows. As he died for all, so he felt and wept for the sufferings of all. The temporal and eternal calamities of the whole human race, and of every individual among them, all seemed to be collected and laid upon him. He saw at one view the whole mighty aggregate of human guilt and human wretchedness; and his boundless benevolence and compassion made it by sympathy all his own. It has been said by philosophers, that if any man could see all the misery which is daily felt in the world, he would never smile again. We need not wonder then that Christ, who saw and felt it all, never smiled, though he often wept. We may add, that the perfect contrast between the heavens which he had left, and the world into which he came, rendered a residence in the latter peculiarly painful to his feelings. In heaven he had seen nothing but holiness and happiness and love. In this world, on the contrary, he saw little but wickedness and hatred and misery, in ten thousand forms. In heaven he was crowned with glory and

honor and majesty, and surrounded by throngs of admiring, adoring angels. On earth, he found himself plunged in poverty, wretchedness and contempt, and surrounded by malignant, implacable enemies. My friends, think of a prince, educated with care and tenderness in his father's court, where he heard nothing but sounds of pleasure and praise, and saw nothing but scenes of honor and magnificence, sent unattended to labor as a slave in a rebellious province, where himself and his father were hated and despised; think of a person of the most delicate and refined taste, going from the bosom of his family and the magnificent abodes of a polished city, to spend his life in the filthy huts of the most degraded and barbarous savages, and compelled daily to witness the disgusting scenes of cruelty and brutality which are there exhibited; think of a man endowed with the tenderest sensibility, compelled to live on a field of battle, among the corpses of the dead and the groans of the dying, or shut up for years in a madhouse with wretched maniacs, where nothing was to be heard but the burst of infuriated passions, the wild laugh of madness, and the shrieks and ravings of despair. Think of these instances, and you will have some conception, though but a faint one, of the scenes which this world presented to our Saviour, of the contrast between it and the heaven he left, of the sorrows which imbittered every moment of his earthly existence, and of the love which induced him voluntarily to submit to such sorrows.

Another circumstance which contributed to render our Saviour a man of sorrows, and his life a life of grief, was the reception he met with from those whom he came to save. Had they received him with that gratitude and respect which he deserved, and permitted him to rescue them from their miseries, it would have been some alleviation of his sorrows. But even this alleviation was in a great measure denied him. Some few, indeed, received him with affection and respect, though even they often grieved him by their unkindness and unbelief; but by far the greater part of his countrymen he was treated with the utmost cruelty and contempt. Many of them would not allow him even to remove their bodily diseases, and still greater numbers were unwilling that he should save them from their sins. Now to a noble, ingenuous mind, nothing is so cutting, so torturing as such conduct. To see himself despised, slandered and perse-

cuted with implacable malice, by the very beings whom he was laboring to save; to see all his endeavors to save them, frustrated by their own incorrigible folly and wickedness; to see them by rejecting him filling up to the brim their cup of criminality and wrath, and sinking into eternal perdition within reach of his vainly-offered hand,—to see this, must have been distressing indeed. Yet this Christ saw. Thus he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; and how deeply it affected him, we may infer from the fact, that though his own sufferings never wrung from him a tear, he once and again wept in the bitterness of his soul over rebellious Jerusalem, exclaiming, O that thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes!

Another circumstance that threw a shade of gloom and melancholy over our Saviour's life, was his clear view, and constant anticipation of the dreadful agonies in which it was to terminate. He was not ignorant, as we happily are, of the miseries which were before him. He could not hope, as we do, when wretched to day, to be happier to-morrow. Every night, when he lay down to rest, the scourge, the crown of thorns, and the cross, were present to his mind; and on these dreadful objects he every morning opened his eyes, and every morning saw them nearer than before. Every day was to him like the day of his death, of such a death too, as no one ever suffered before or since. How deeply the prospect affected him, is evident from his own language: I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

Such, my friends, are the circumstances which prove that our Saviour was, during life, a man of sorrows. Of the sorrows of his death we shall say nothing. The bitter agonies of that never-to-be-forgotten hour, the torturing scourge, the lacerating nails, and the racking cross we shall pass in silence. Nor shall we now bring into view the tenfold horrors which overwhelmed his soul, rendering it exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. These we have often attempted to describe to you, though here description must always fail. Enough has been said to show the justice of that exclamation which the prophet utters in the person of Christ: Behold and see, all ye that pass by, if there be any sorrow like my sorrow. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. I looked for some to pity, but there was none; for comforters, but I found none.

2. We have in this prophetic passage an account of our Saviour's conduct under the pressure of these sorrows. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Never was language more descriptive of the most perfect meekness and patience; never was prediction more fully justified by the event than in the case before us. Christ was indeed led as a lamb to the slaughter. Silent, meek and unrepining, he stood before his butchers, at once innocent and patient as a lamb. No murmurs, no complaints, no angry recriminations escaped from his lips. If they were opened, it was but to express the most perfect submission to his Father's will, and to breathe out prayers for his murderers. Yes, even at that dreadful moment, when they were nailing him to the cross, when nature, whose voice will at such a time be heard, was shuddering and convulsed in the prospect of a speedy and violent death; when his soul was tortured by the assaults of malignant fiends, and his Father's face hidden from his view; even then he possessed his soul in patience to such a degree, as to be able to pray for his murderers. My friends, we must attempt to bring the scene more fully to your view. Come with us, a moment, to calvary. See the meek sufferer, standing with hands fast bound in the midst of his enemies; sinking under the weight of his cross, and lacerated in every part by the thorny rods with which he had been scourged. See the savage, ferocious soldiers seizing with rude violence, his sacred body, forcing it down upon the cross, wresting and extending his limbs, and with remorseless cruelty forcing through his hands and feet the ragged spikes which were to fasten him on it. See the Jewish priests and rulers watching with looks of malicious pleasure the horrid scene, and attempting to increase his sufferings by scoffs and blasphemies. Now contemplate attentively the countenance of the wonderful sufferer, which seems like heaven opening in the midst of hell, and tell me what it expressed. You see it indeed full of anguish, but it expresses nothing like impatience, resentment or revenge. On the contrary, it beams with pity, benevolence and forgiveness. It perfectly corresponds with the prayer, which, raising his mild, imploring eye to heaven, he pours forth to God: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do! Christian, look

at your Master, and learn how to suffer. Sinner, look at your Saviour, and learn to admire, to imitate, and to forgive. But why, it may be naturally asked, why is this patient innocent sufferer thus afflicted? Why, in his life, in his death, is he thus emphatically a man of sorrows? To this question our text returns an answer, and an answer which ought to sink deep into our hearts; for in it we are all most deeply interested: He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; by his stripes we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Here, my friends, we see the true cause of our Saviour's unparalleled sufferings. He was cut off, says the prophet, but not for himself. He knew no sin, but he was made sin, made a curse for us. We have all strayed from the path of duty. Yes, you and I, and all our race, have forsaken the God that made us, and chosen the path that leads to hell. God's violated law condemned us to die. Justice demanded the execution of the sentence. There was apparently no remedy. It is true that God, as our Creator and Father, was sufficiently inclined to spare us; but truth and justice forbade him to do it, unless a suitable atonement could be found. There was but one individual in the universe who could make such an atonement, and that being, prompted by infinite compassion, offered himself for this purpose. The Father, with equal love, accepted the offer. To carry it into effect, the Son assumed our nature, and appeared on earth; and the bitter cup, which the divine law condemned us to drink, was put into his hand, and he drank it to the last drop. We were condemned to live a life of sorrow and pain, and therefore he lived such a life. We were condemned to shame and everlasting contempt; and therefore he hid not his face from shame and spitting. We were condemned to die under the curse; and therefore he died the accursed death of the cross: We were condemned to lose the favor and endure the wrath of God; and therefore Christ was forsaken by his Father in the agonies of death. We were condemned to perish without mercy; and therefore Christ had no mercy, no pity shown him in his last moments. We were condemned to remain under the power of death, till by satisfying divine justice we could restore ourselves to life; and

therefore Christ remained in the grave till he had made full satisfaction, and then resumed the life he had laid down. Thus he bore our sins, or, what is the same, the punishment of our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead unto sin, might live unto God.

Lastly, our text describes the manner in which Christ was treated, when he thus came as a man of sorrows to atone for our sins. He is despised and rejected of men. We hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. How literally this prediction was fulfilled, we have already seen. Yet who but an inspired prophet would have predicted that such would be the reception of such a person, coming from heaven on such a design? We should naturally expect that he would be received with the most lively emotions and demonstrations of grateful joy, by the beings whom he came to save. Even after we were told that, instead of thus receiving, they rejected and condemned him, we should have expected that when they saw his lamb-like patience and meekness, and heard him praying for his murderers, they would have relented and spared him. And when this could not prevail, we should have hoped that the miracles which attended his crucifixion, and especially his resurrection from the dead, would convince them of their error, and cause them to relent. But none of these things, nor all of them united, could conquer the inveterate malice of his enemies. Living and dying, rising and reigning, he was still despised and rejected of men. Neither his miracles, nor his sorrows, nor his meekness, nor his patience, could shield him from hatred and contempt. But what was his crime? What had he done? I answer, he was good; he dared to speak the truth; he reproved men for their sins, he testified to the world that its deeds were evil; above all, he bore the image of God, of that God whom sinners hate. These were crimes never to be forgiven; crimes, for which nothing but his blood could atone; crimes, which in their view rendered him unworthy of that commiseration which men usually feel for the vilest malefactors when in the agonies of death. Nor were those who treated him in this manner, worse than the rest of mankind. As in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man. The truth of this assertion is abundantly proved by the manner in which all succeeding generations have treated Christ. He

has always been despised and rejected of men; and he is so still. It is true, he has long since ascended to heaven, and therefore cannot be the immediate object of their attacks. But his gospel and his servants are still in the world; and the manner in which they are treated, is sufficient evidence, that the feelings of the natural heart toward Christ are not materially different from those of the Jews. His servants are hated, ridiculed and despised, and his gospel is rejected, and his institutions slighted. Wait but a few moments, my friends, and you will see many of this assembly treating him in this manner. You will see the passages leading from this house thronged, like the broad road, with persons who are crowding away from Christ, disobeying his dying command, refusing to commemorate his death; and thus proving that the Saviour is still, as formerly, despised and rejected of men, that the language of their hearts still is, we will not have this man to reign over us. I am aware that many will be displeased with this interpretation of their conduct; but, my friends, it is impossible to interpret it in any other way. Every man, who voluntarily neglects to confess Christ before men, and to commemorate his dying love, must say, either that he does not choose to do it, or that he is not prepared to do it. Now if a man says, I do not choose to confess Christ, he certainly rejects him. If he does not choose to remember Christ, he certainly chooses to forget him. If he is unwilling to bind himself to live such a life, as a profession of religion requires, he certainly loves sin better than he does his Saviour. On the other hand, if any one shall say, I wish to come to the table of Christ, but am not prepared, he expressly avows himself an enemy of Christ, for all his friends are fully prepared to approach his table; and those who are not his friends are his enemies; for Christ has said, He that is not with me is against me. For a man to say, I am not prepared to come to Christ's table, is the same as to say, I do not repent of sin, I do not believe in or love Christ; I am not willing to live a prayerful, watchful, religious life. Nor are those who come to Christ's table without obeying his commands, less guilty of rejecting Christ. We find in the parable of the marriage, that he who came in without a wedding garment was excluded, as well as those who refused to come. To sum up all in a word, it is certain that all who do not receive the instructions of

Christ with the temper of a little child, reject him, as a prophet. All who do not trust in his merits alone for salvation reject him as a Saviour; and all who do not habitually and sincerely obey his commands, reject him as a king. This being the case, the conduct of multitudes among us fully justifies us in asserting, that Christ is still despised and rejected of men.

Application 1. Was Christ a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Then, my Christian friends, we need not be surprised or offended, if we are often called to drink of the cup of sorrows; if we find the world a vale of tears. This is one of the ways in which we must be conformed to our glorious Head. Indeed, his example has sanctified grief, and almost made it pleasant to mourn. One would think, that Christians could scarcely wish to go rejoicing through a world which their Master passed through mourning. The path in which we follow him is bedewed with his tears and stained with his blood. It is true, that from the ground thus watered and fertilized many rich flowers and fruits of paradise spring up to refresh us, in which we may and ought to rejoice. But still our joy should be softened and sanctified by godly sorrow. When we are partaking of the banquet which his love has spread for us, we should never forget how dearly it was purchased.

> "There's not a gift his hand bestows,
> But cost his heart a groan."

The joy, the honor, the glory through eternity shall be ours; but the sorrows, the sufferings, the agonies which purchased them were all his own.

2. Was Christ wounded for our transgressions; were the iniquities of all his people laid upon him; then surely, my Christian friends, our iniquities shall never be laid upon us. He has borne and carried them away. He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Away then with all guilty unbelieving fears; and come, washed in the blood and clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and feast with him at his table. Come and see how your salvation was effected; come and look at the fountain whence your present, your eternal happiness flows. In this ordinance you see Christ wounded, bruised, and put to grief for your sins. You see him groaning, sinking, dying under your guilt, under that

curse which you deserved to have borne. Come then, sympathise with your sorrowing Master in his sufferings. Come and look at this great sight, till sin appears above all things hateful, till Christ appears most precious and lovely, till your hearts are broken with sorrow for sin, and the love of Christ constrains you to feel and live to him who died for you. And while you look, lest you should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, remember that he who is here set before you crucified as the Lamb of God, is now at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high; and hear him saying, Fear not. I am the first and the last.

A word to those who are now about to depart, or as the prophet expresses it in our text, to hide their faces from Christ. You have heard, my friends, of the sufferings of Christ. You now see him set forth crucified before you in the symbols of his body and blood. And have you no concern in these sufferings? Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Nothing to you, that the Son of God has appeared on earth as a man of sorrows, and suffered and died for the sins of the world? Yes, my friends, it is something, it is much to you. Whether you are interested in the benefits of his death or not, you are in some measure the occasion of it. He was wounded for your transgressions, he was bruised for your iniquities; and if you will now come and believe in him, you shall all by his stripes be healed. Will you view his sufferings unmoved? Will you persist in despising and rejecting him, and render his sufferings for you of no avail? Will you become accomplices with the betrayers and murderers of Christ, and by continuing to reject him, crucify to yourselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame? O be not so cruel to Christ, so cruel to yourselves. Listen to us, while in the name and as the messenger of this man of sorrows, we attempt to plead his cause, and persuade you to receive him. See him for your sakes dragged as a lamb to the slaughter. Hear him praying for his murderers, and for you who neglect him, Father, forgive them. Hear him saying, O sinner, did I suffer all this for thee, and is this the return you make? Do ye thus requite your Lord, your Saviour, O foolish people and unwise? O for your own sakes, for my sake, for the sake of all my sorrows and agonies, I beseech you not to destroy yourselves. My friends, do not your hearts begin to relent? Can you resist the pleadings of this man of sorrows? Do not your

sins begin to appear hateful? Do you not wish that you had confessed him ere this, and that you could now come and weep before him at his table? Do not your hearts begin to say, Lord it is enough. I will reject thee no longer. My hard heart has stood out against thine anger, but it cannot resist thy sorrows and thy love. If it is not too late, if thou canst receive such an ungrateful wretch, take me; for from henceforth I am wholly thine.

SERMON LVI.

CHRIST A KING.

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.—1 Corinthians xv. 24, 25.

Nothing can more powerfully tend to give us just and exalted conceptions of Christ, than a due consideration of the various names, titles and characters by which he is described in the word of God. These names and titles, which are more than two hundred in number, include every thing which is great or glorious, amiable or excellent in the estimation of mankind. It would not be easy, neither is it necessary on the present occasion, to enumerate them all, but we wish to direct your attention particularly to one of them, viz., that of Ruler or King.

By this title he is very frequently described in both the Old and New Testament? Under this character it was predicted that he would make his appearance in the world, many years before his incarnation. Unto us, says the prophet, a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called the Prince or King of Peace. A similar prediction was uttered by Gabriel, to the virgin Mary, respecting him, previous to his birth. The Lord God, says he, shall give unto him the throne of his Father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and

of his kingdom there shall be no end. Numerous predictions to the same purpose may be found scattered thoughout the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms of David, and the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel. In perfect conformity with these predictions, we find our Saviour, while on earth, using the language and exercising the authority of a king. I appoint unto you a kingdom, says he to his twelve disciples, even as my Father has appointed a kingdom unto me. Similar language he used when arraigned at the tribunal of Pilate, though he knew that death would be the consequence. My kingdom, says he, is not of this world. Then said Pilate, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest I am a king; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world. The same truth was taught by the apostles after his resurrection and ascension to heaven. They represent him as being seated on the right hand of the throne of God, upholding all things by the word of his power; acting as head over all things to his church. To the same purpose are the words of our text: He must reign, till all enemies are put under his feet: and then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, after he shall have put down all other rule, authority and power. This is confessedly an important and instructive, but at the same time a very difficult passage. In attempting to explain it, we shall aim to avoid being wise above what is written. Our design is, to describe, so far as the Scriptures enable us, the nature, origin, progress, and termination of that kingdom, which Christ is here represented as delivering up to the Father.

I. With respect to the nature of this kingdom, we may observe, that it is not a temporal or earthly kingdom! Here lay the grand mistake of the Jews. The prophecies of the Old Testament had taught them, that the promised Messiah was to be a king; and as they could form no conception of a spiritual kingdom, they fondly imagined that he would make his appearance on earth as an earthly monarch, and not only deliver them from the Roman yoke, but reduce the whole world under their authority. Even his own disciples fell into the mistake, and continued in it till after his resurrection; for at that period we find them saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? It was not till the Holy Spirit, who was to

guide them into all truth, had been poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost, that they began to form more correct opinions respecting the kingdom, which their Master came to establish. They then learned that his kingdom was to be erected in the hearts of men; that it consisted in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and that he was enabled to be a king and a Saviour, that he might give repentance and remission of sins to his people, and deliver them, not from temporal, but spiritual bondage.

The kingdom which Christ is here represented as delivering up to his Father, is not that which he originally possessed as God. You need not be told, that he is God and man in one person, and that as God he is equal with the Father, and shares in that eternal, underived and uncontrollable authority, which he exercises over all the works of his hands. In this respect, he and his Father are one, and possess the same kingdom; and this kingdom he neither will nor can resign, though he may for a time suspend the exercise of his divine authority.

What then is the kingdom, which Christ is here said to deliver up to his Father.

I answer, it is the Mediatorial kingdom, or kingdom of grace, that kingdom which, he holds as God and man united, and which he received from his Father in consequence of his undertaking the office of Mediator. That we may form clearer ideas of the nature of this kingdom, we must consider, as was proposed,

2. Its origin and design.

We are told by the apostle that in the beginning, that is, before the world was formed, or the plan of redemption laid, the Word was with God, and that the Word was God. The Word then dwelt in the bosom of the Father, and shared with him the throne of the universe. As the apostle expresses it, he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God. God was then all in all. The names of Father, Son, and Spirit were unknown, though that mysterious distinction, on which these names are founded, then existed in the divine nature. There was no Mediator between God and his creatures; for all creatures were then holy, and consequently needed no mediator to interpose between them and God. Sinners only need a mediator. Holy beings may approach God in their own

names and plead for themselves. But when man sinned, and the plan of redemption was formed, a mediator became necessary. This office the Word took upon himself, and was in consequence made flesh. The Father created a human soul, which the Word took into union with himself, and thus became the Son of God. In union with this soul, he entered into a human body, and thus became the Son of man. Thus, though he was originally equal with God, and was God, yet he humbled himself and became of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of sinful flesh. These and other similar expressions seem to imply that, when the Word undertook the office of Mediator, he suspended for a time the exercise of his divine perfections, laid aside his equality with the Father, and emptied himself of all that infinite fulness which he originally possessed, and engaged to act as the Father's servant, and to do nothing but by his power and authority. In a word, he condescended to put himself into that state from which Adam fell, a state of trial and probation, to stand like him as the head and representative of his people, and to do every thing which was necessary to accomplish the salvation, and secure the honor of the law they had broken. He engaged to know nothing which the Father did not reveal to him, to work no miracles which the Father did not direct him to perform; to have no will of his own, and to make it his meat and drink to do his Father's will and finish his work. A suitable consideration of these things, which are all implied in Christ's humbling and emptying himself, will enable us to understand those passages in which Christ speaks of himself as inferior to the Father, as being the Father's servant, as doing nothing of himself, and as not knowing the day nor the hour of judgment; for though as God he was equal with the Father, yet as Mediator he was his inferior, and could do nothing without him. A proper attention to these observations will also enable us to answer those objections against our Saviour's divinity, which are drawn from his having the Spirit of God given to him. We read that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, that he giveth the Spirit not by measure unto him, and that it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell. Hence it may be asked, if Christ be God, why did he need the assistance of the Holy Spirit? or

how could God give it to him? or how could it be owing to the pleasure of the Father, that all fulness dwelt in him? But if we consider that Christ did, as it were, lay aside his own divinity, and empty himself of his own infinite fulness, we still see that he needed to be filled with the fulness of the Father, and to have the Holy Spirit to assist him; and if we consider that he acted as the Father's servant, we shall see the propriety of his praying to him, and receiving from him power to work miracles, to lay down his life and to take it again.

Farther, if we consider that his human nature was in a state of probation, as Adam was, we shall see why he was tempted, why he is said to have been made perfect through sufferings, and to have learned obedience by the things that he suffered. Had he fallen in time of trial, as Adam did, his people never could have been saved, and his human nature must have perished. But it did not fail. He overcame the tempter; persevered even to the end, and finally became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. As a reward of his sufferings, obedience, and death, the Father gave him that mediatorial kingdom which is mentioned in our text. This kingdom includes all the creatures with which we are acquainted in heaven, earth or hell; for we are told that God hath put all things under him; that all power is committed to him in heaven and earth, that he is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and that for this cause he died and rose, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living. Hence, the apostle informs us, that because he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, God hath highly exalted him, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly place, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come; and hath put all things beneath his feet, and given him to be head over all things to his church. In a word, God has resigned the whole government of the universe into his hands for a season, and given him authority to execute judgment, so that now the Father judgeth no man, having committed all judgment unto the Son. This unlimited power and authority God has bestowed upon his Son, in order to qualify him for executing the great office of Mediator between him and his rebellious creatures; and to enable him to deliver those out of the snare of the devil,

who are led captive at his will; to cast out the strong man armed from his palace in the heart, and save even to the uttermost all who come unto God by him.

The laws of this extensive kingdom are recorded in the gospel. The subjects of it may be divided into two grand classes, those who are obedient, and those who are rebellious. The former class is composed of good men and angels; the latter, of wicked men and devils. The former serve Christ willingly and cheerfully. He rules them with the golden sceptre of love; his law is written in their hearts; they esteem his yoke easy and his burden light, and habitually execute his will. All the bright armies of heaven, angels and archangels, who excel in strength, are his servants, and go forth at his command, as messengers of love to minister unto the heirs of salvation, or as messengers of wrath to execute vengeance on his enemies. Nor are his obedient subjects to be found only in heaven. In this rebellious world also the standard of the cross, the banner of his love, is erected, and thousands and millions who were once his enemies, have been brought willing captives to his feet, have joyfully acknowledged him as their Master and Lord, and sworn allegiance to him as the Captain of their salvation. Nor is his authority less absolute over the second class of his subjects, who still persist in their rebellion. In vain do they say, We will not have this man to reign over us. He rules them with a rod of iron, causes even their wrath to praise him, and makes them the involuntary instruments of carrying on his great designs. He holds all the infernal spirits in a chain, governs the conquerors, monarchs and great ones of the earth, and in all things wherein they did proudly, is still above them. None are too small to escape his notice, none are too great to be controlled by his power.

In vain do the people rage; in vain do the kings and rulers of the earth take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree, the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for

thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. But this leads us to consider,

3. The progress of Messiah's mediatorial kingdom. By the progress of this kingdom, we do not mean the increase of Messiah's power; for, as we have just seen, this is already unlimited and universal; but we mean the spread of the gospel, and the increase of the number of Christ's obedient subjects. In this respect, the progress of his kingdom has hitherto been comparatively small; for though thousands and millions have submitted to his arms, yet many more millions are still in arms against him. Satan still apparently reigns as the prince and god of this ruined world. Darkness still covers the earth, and gross darkness the people; and by far the greater part of our race are still the wretched captives of idolatry, vice and superstition. But it shall not always, it shall not long be thus. The promise of him who cannot lie assures us, that it shall not. His word abounds with the most explicit and animating predictions of the future spread and approaching glories of Messiah's reign. The stone, which the king of Babylon saw in his dream, cut out of a mountain without hands, shall spread and fill the earth. In the days of these kings, that is, of the Roman emperors, says the prophet Daniel, in expounding this dream, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; it shall never be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. The fulfilment of these predictions the same prophet elsewhere describes. I saw in the night visions, says he, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds, and came to the Ancient of days, and there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. In addition to this, the prophecies of Isaiah and the minor prophets are filled with predictions of the same import. We are there assured, that in the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it; that the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth; that Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God, and that the Jews shall be brought in with the

fulness of the Gentiles. It is however needless to insist on these predictions, for our text assures us, that Christ shall reign till all enemies are put under his feet; and we are elsewhere informed, that Jehovah has sworn by himself, that every knee shall bow to Jesus, and every tongue confess that he is Lord. In vain will any strive to prevent the fulfilment of this declaration. Those who refuse to confess him cheerfully, shall be compelled to do it reluctantly; those who will not bend shall break; for God has declared, that he will overturn, overturn, and overturn, till he shall come whose right it is, and the dominion shall be given to him, and that all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Nor will it be long, ere these predictions are fulfilled. Already is the banner of the cross unfurled. Already are the soldiers of Christ going forth to subdue the nations, with weapons which are mighty to the pulling down of strong holds. Already does a voice begin to be heard throughout the world, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Already has Christ ascended the chariot of his salvation, and is riding forth, conquering and to conquer, arrayed in meekness and truth, and righteousness, while God overturns, overturns, and overturns, the nations which oppose him, and dashes them in pieces against each other, like a potter's vessel. Already is the cry heard from Asia and Africa, Come over and help us; and soon will Ethiopia stretch out her hands to God, and the isles of the Southern ocean wait for his law. Soon will the cry be heard, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. He who sits on the throne is exclaiming, Behold, I create all things new; I create new heavens and a new earth. Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong arm, his reward is with him, and his work before him. Prepare ye then the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. But what tongue can describe the happiness which is approaching? who can paint the glories of Messiah's reign? In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth. His name shall endure as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall

the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor learn war any more. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together. Thus that paradisaical state, which was destroyed by the first Adam, shall be restored by the Second; and love, peace, and happiness, which sin had banished from the world, shall again return, under the mild reign of him who is emphatically styled the Prince of Peace. Who, in view of these glorious prospects, can avoid exclaiming,

> O long expected day begin;
> Dawn on this world of death and sin!
> Come the great day, the glorious hour, &c.

We proceed now, as was proposed, to consider,

4. The termination of Christ's mediatorial kingdom. How long this kingdom will continue on earth, before its termination arrives, is uncertain. We are indeed informed, in the Scriptures, that he shall reign on earth with his people for a thousand years; but in prophetic language, a day is put for a year; and if we thus understand this prediction, the duration of his reign will be three hundred and sixty-five thousand years. In favor of this supposition writers have assigned various reasons. But whether they are right or not, in their conjecture, it is neither possible nor necessary to determine. It is however evident, that after the expiration of this period, the powers of darkness will make one more violent effort to destroy the kingdom of Christ on earth; that a great apostacy will take place, and that the church will appear to be in imminent danger. But then will be seen the sign of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. The day of judgment will break suddenly upon the world, the righteous go into heaven, and the wicked into hell. The transactions of the judgment will be the last act of Messiah's mediatorial reign. All his enemies will then be put under him. Death itself will be destroyed, or as the apostle expresses it, will be cast into the lake of fire, together with the fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, and whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie. Then will a mediator between God and man

no longer be needed. He will not be needed for wicked men and devils; for the day of grace will then be past, and they will have no more offers of salvation, no more opportunities of approaching unto God. Nor will God's people any longer need a mediator; for they will be then perfectly holy; they will have no more sins to be forgiven, no more favors to ask, but will themselves be kings and priests to God, and live and reign with Christ forever. Then, therefore, will the end come. Then will Christ deliver up his mediatorial kingdom to his Father, together with his delegated power and authority, and reassume his own proper eternal divinity, together with that infinite fulness which he had laid aside. If it be asked, how this representation agrees with the twenty-eighth verse, where we are told, that then shall the Son also be subject to him that did put all things under him; I answer, in the language of Scripture, things are often said to be, when they manifestly appear to be. Thus it is said in one place, that the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. But we know that the Lord alone is as much exalted now, as he can be at any future day. The meaning, therefore, must be, that in that day the Lord alone will more manifestly appear to be exalted, than he does at present. So in this case, when it is said, Then the Son also shall be subject unto him, that did put all things under him, it implies, that Christ will then evidently appear to have been subject to his Father during the whole continuance of his mediatorial kingdom, and to have acted merely as the Father's servant. Then God will be all in all; that is, he will then cease to govern his creatures by a mediator, or any other delegated power, and will therefore appear more clearly, than he does at present, to be all in all.

In conclusion: What an animating, encouraging subject is this to those of you, my friends, who have chosen Christ for your Lord and Master, and become the willing subjects of his kingdom! Do you ask, how shall we know this to be our character? I ask, in return, do you love Christ's laws? Are you reconciled to his government? Are his friends your friends? Are his enemies your enemies? Are you waiting and praying for the universal spread of his kingdom? If so, you are his willing subjects; and we may venture to say to you, your Lord reigneth, and he shall reign till all his enemies and all your enemies are put under his feet. Because he lives and reigns,

you shall live and reign also. He is for you; who then can be against you? Come then, and renew your oath of allegiance at his table. Engage with fresh vigor and courage in your Christian warfare. Deny, mortify, crucify your sins. Labor to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Labor also to bring others into his kingdom. Do all in your power to fulfil the great law of his kingdom. Go preach the gospel to every creature. Fervently pray that the Lord of the harvest would send forth laborers into his harvest. But be not content with prayers. Contribute cheerfully to the Lord of your substance. Other kings impose taxes on their subjects. But the tribute which he requires, is a free will offering. Hasten then to pay this tribute; and while you are feasting on the rich fruits, which his bounty has provided, remember those who are perishing for want of the bread of life.

To those of you who refuse to submit to Christ, this is an awful and alarming subject. You are the enemies of a being, whose enemies must be destroyed. You are contending with omnipotence. You are practically saying, that he shall not reign over you, who is appointed by God to reign over all. But it is not too late to repent. You are still at liberty to choose whether you will have the King of kings for an enemy or a friend; whether you will serve him voluntarily or by constraint. One way or the other you must serve him. God has sworn by himself, that you shall. Is it not then better to serve him willingly, and be rewarded, than to serve reluctantly and be destroyed? Do any of you say, we are willing to serve him? We are willing, sincerely willing to take him as our Lord and Master? Then show your sincerity by serving him. Treat him as subjects ought to treat their king. Treat him as you wish your children to treat you, and all will be well. But if you refuse or neglect to do this; if you persist in habitually disregarding the least of his commands, you practically say, We will not have this man to reign over us.

SERMON LVII.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

ACTS I. 9—11

THERE are four events in the life of our Saviour, which are peculiarly interesting to all his real disciples. They are his birth, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension to heaven. It is to this last event that our attention is now called. The description given of it in St. Luke's gospel contains some additional particulars, which, though not mentioned in the passage before us, we shall notice in the prosecution of this discourse. We are there informed, that he lifted up his hands and blessed his disciples, and that while he blessed them he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

In meditating on this event, so interesting to all true Christians, and so suitable to the circumstances in which we meet, let us consider,

1. The ascension itself. That we may look at this scene aright, it is desirable to view it as it appeared to his disciples. In order to this, we must, by the aid of a lively imagination,

and a strong faith, place ourselves as it were, in their circles, and look at it through their eyes. Finding them assembled in Jerusalem, their Master, for the last time, calls them to follow him. They obey, and he leads them out of the city, to the mount of olives. There, standing on an eminence, where they could all see him, he gives them his last instructions and his parting promises. Then lifting up his hands, he pronounces upon them a blessing, and while he pronounces it, they see him rise from the earth, self-moved, self-supported, and begin to ascend. Reclining as on the bosom of the air, he rises higher and higher, with a gentle, gradual motion, his countenance beaming compassion and love, still fixed on his disciples, and his hands extended still scattering blessings on them as he ascended. Now he rises above the groves by which they were surrounded; now he mounts to the middle region of the air; now he reaches the clouds, and still they see him. But there a cloudy vehicle receives him, conceals him from their eyes, and rises with him. With eager eyes they still follow the ascending cloud, as it mounts toward the skies, lessening to their sight, till it becomes only a small speck, and at length wholly disappears, far away in the ethereal regions.

But though their eyes could follow him no farther, we need not stop here. Borrowing the glass of revelation we may see him still ascending, reaching, and entering the wide, unfolded gates of heaven, sitting down at the right hand of the throne of God, far above all principalities and powers and might and dominion, and every name which is named, not only in this world, but in the world to come; and there receiving the sceptre of universal empire, and exercising all power in heaven and on earth. Assisted by revelation, faith may also see the employments in which our ascended Saviour is engaged. She may see him appearing in the presence of the Father, as the Advocate of his people, and continuing to make intercession for all that come unto God by him. She may see him entering with his own blood into the heavenly temple and there presenting a full atonement for the sins of all who believe in him. She may see him receiving gifts for men, and sending down those gifts to the successive generations of mankind. Finally, she may see him fulfilling his dying declaration to his disciples: In my Father's house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you.

Such were the purposes for which Christ ascended to heaven, such the employment in which he is now engaged, and in which those of us who are heirs of salvation shall find him engaged when we enter the mansions above. But leaving for the present the contemplation of these objects, let us return and consider,

II. The manner in which his disciples were affected by this event. We may well suppose that on such an occasion, they would feel strange and various emotions. Their surprise and wonder would be raised to the utmost by so strange and unexpected a spectacle; their faith in the divine mission of their Master must have been greatly strengthened. They could not but rejoice to see him thus honored and exalted; yet their joy must have been mingled with sorrow, when they saw one whom they so much loved, whom they had followed so long, and on whom they entirely depended, suddenly taken from them, and leaving them alone in a world like this. Under the influence of these and other powerful emotions, they stood gazing upwards, with their eyes fixed on that part of the sky where they last saw him, as if they were determined never to withdraw them, as if, after witnessing such a spectacle, there was nothing below the skies worthy of notice. Indeed, every thing earthly must have appeared very small and contemptible, to those who had just witnessed such a sight. A vision of Christ thus entering into his glory, stained all human glory, and they probably could not refrain from earnestly desiring to follow him to that happy world whither they had seen him ascend.

But this they could not as yet be permitted to do. He had told them that they could not follow him then, but that they should follow him afterward. Before that time could arrive, they had many important duties to perform; and to these duties it was necessary that their attention should now be directed. Accordingly their ascended Master, who still saw them, though they saw not him, took measures for this purpose. While they were still gazing intently upon the heavens, their number was suddenly increased by two persons who in form, countenance, and language, appeared to be men, but whose white and shining apparel declared them to be angels. But this leads us to consider,

III. The message delivered to them by these heavenly messengers. Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing up

into heaven? This language seems intended to convey a gentle reproof. It was as if the angels had said, Have you not other employment assigned you by that Master whom you earnestly follow with your eyes? Have you forgotten the commission and instructions which he gave you before his ascension? Have you forgotten that you are his witnesses, and that you are to proclaim to all nations what you have heard and seen? The time of inactive contemplation is passed, and the hour for action is arrived. Besides, you are henceforth to walk not by sight, but by faith. Though you have known Christ after the flesh, yet in this manner you will know him no more. You are now to endure as seeing him who is invisible, to be guided, animated and supported by that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. That something like this was the import of their address, seems probable from what follows. This same Jesus whom ye have seen go into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven; shall come, as he informed you, in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory to judge the world. This was, in fact, reminding them that it must henceforth be their great business, not to stand gazing after their ascended Master, but to prepare themselves, and warn others to prepare, for his coming to judgment. Let us now attend,

IV. To the conduct of the disciples after witnessing this event, and hearing this angelic message. In the first place, they worshipped him. We do not read that they worshipped the angels. Bright and glorious as these spirits were, they knew that it would be vain and idolatrous to worship them; nor would the angels have permitted it; for when John, some years after this, fell down at the feet of an angel, he rebuked him, saying, See thou do it not. But though they could not worship angels, they worshipped their ascended Master; for they believed that though they could no longer see him, he still saw them; nor did any voice from heaven, nor did the angels themselves charge them with idolatry, or forbid them to worship him. Indeed, who could, who can blame them for worshipping one whom they had just seen ascending by his own power from earth to heaven?

In the second place, they spent much of their time in the public worship of Jehovah. They were daily, St. Luke informs

us, in the temple, praising and blessing God. This was while they waited for the effusion of the Holy Spirit from on high. Their Master had commanded them to wait at Jerusalem, until he should send down upon them this promised blessing, and they punctually obeyed his commands.

In the third place, while they spent much time in public worship, they spent still more time in private, social prayer. We are informed that, as soon as they returned from the Mount of Olives, all assembled in an upper room, and there continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. This earnestness and union in prayer seems to have been occasioned by what they had just seen. And well might what they had seen produce such an effect. They had seen their Master, whom they knew to be most powerful, generous, and kind, and who had said, whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it, go alive into heaven. They knew, therefore, that they had in heaven a most powerful and affectionate Advocate to procure an answer to their prayers; they did, as it were, still see his hand extended to dispense blessings, and still hear him say, Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. No wonder, then, that after returning from such a sight, they were fervent, constant, and united in prayer. No wonder that they persevered in such prayer for many days successively, until the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit descended on them like a rushing, mighty wind, and they experienced the truth of their Master's parting words, It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

Having thus briefly considered our Saviour's ascension with its attending circumstances and effects, let us next inquire what we may learn from it.

First: We may perhaps learn from it whether we do, or do not really believe the Scriptures. In order to ascertain this, let me ask each of you whether you really believe that the events which we have been considering actually occurred? do you really believe, that a person who appeared to be only a man, but who called himself the Son of God, was seen alive for forty days successively, after he had been put to death as a malefactor? that at the expiration of this time, he was seen in open day, by a competent number of witnesses, to rise from the earth,

and without any visible effort or means of support, to ascend till he reached the region of clouds, and that there a cloud received him and concealed him from the eyes of beholders? Do you really believe that while these beholders were still gazing after him, two angels appeared to them in a human form and said, This same Jesus, whom ye have seen go into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven? Do you believe that these events actually took place in the world which we inhabit, and that they were seen by human beings like ourselves? If you do not believe this, if it appears to you more like a tale, a fiction, or a dream, than a reality, you do not believe the Bible. Or if it appears to you like an event which took place in some other world than this, or among a different race of beings from ourselves, you do not believe the Bible. But perhaps you will say, we do believe that all these things actually took place in our world. Then surely you regard them as most interesting and important events; you read the book which contains them, and other wonderful facts, with deep interest, and you are affected by its contents, as you are affected by other important truths which you really believe. If not, you do not believe the Scriptures, whatever you may profess. Your understandings, perhaps, assent to these truths, but in your hearts you do not believe them. These remarks, however, are too general. We must be more particular, and our text enables us to be so, for we may learn from it,

Secondly: In what manner those who really believe in Christ's ascension to heaven, and its attending circumstances, will be affected by it. It is, I presume, universally acknowledged, that facts and events which we really believe, affect us in nearly the same manner, though not in the same degree, as if we saw them. For instance, if we really believe that a parent or child, a husband or any other dear friend, has died in a distant place, it will affect us almost, though not, perhaps, quite so much, as if we actually saw him die. If, then, we really believe the events which have been described, we shall be affected in some measure as if we had seen them. How they were affected, you have just heard. They worshipped Christ. If, then, we actually believe that he ascended to heaven, there to reign till his second coming, we shall worship Him, that is, we shall address to him prayers and thanksgivings. They spent

much time in the temple blessing and praising God. If we believe what the gospel relates of Jesus Christ, we shall do the same; for surely we cannot refrain from often praising God for providing such an Advocate and Intercessor for us, in heaven.

Again: Those who witnessed our Saviour's ascension, were excited to fervent, united, and persevering prayer. And surely, if we really believe that Jesus Christ has actually ascended into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for all who call on his name, to obtain blessings for them, and to prepare a place for their reception when they leave this world, we shall be led to call on his name with frequency and fervency, and to unite with his praying people. Such are some of the effects which will result from a real belief of the events which have been described. If, then, these effects are not produced upon you, my hearers, it will prove that you do not believe the volume in which they are recorded. And if you, my professing hearers, who are assembled to commemorate the Lord Jesus Christ, have faith in present lively exercise, you will be affected in some measure as you would have been had you witnessed the events which have been described. They will be presented to your minds and hearts in the vivid colors of truth and reality; this house will appear to you like the Mount of Olives, and you will almost see the Saviour, the symbols of whose body and blood are before you, rise from that table as from the grave, and re-ascend his native heaven. God grant you all faith to see this. You will then go from this house, saying to yourselves and to each other, we have seen strange things to-day.

But this is not all. If you believe that two angels really appeared to the disciples, and foretold the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, then, of course, you must believe that he certainly will come, come as he declared, to judge the world; for those heavenly messengers would not assert a falsehood. And if it was a most wonderful and surprising thing to see him ascend alone to heaven in the form of a man, what a sight it will be to see him descending from heaven in the form of God, shining resplendent in all his Father's glories, and surrounded by thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand angels and arch angels, while at his summons all the dead arise and stand before him in judgment.

This will be a spectacle indeed, such a spectacle as the world

never saw. But if the Bible is true, we shall all actually see this spectacle, for its language is, Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him. And if you believe the Bible, then you believe that you will see it, believe that you will be actors in it, believe that you, as individuals, will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and receive your doom from his lips. And do you believe this? Are you living as if you believed it? If you do believe it, you are surely making it your great, your chief concern to be prepared for Christ's second coming, prepared to meet your Judge in peace. And is this your great concern? Are you living like accountable creatures, who expect to be tried by the Word of God, and to be rewarded according to your works? If not, where is your faith, and what is your belief in the Bible? Nothing but a dream, nothing but a cold, barren faith, which being without works is dead. And if God has clearly revealed truths which are thus calculated to affect you, and the only reason why they do not affect you, is that you do not believe them, then surely you are without excuse.

To conclude: subjects like those we have been considering, may be of admirable service to every Christian, if he knows how to use them aright. You are all aware, my brethren, that this world is your great enemy, that worldly-mindedness is in some form or other your besetting sin. You are also aware that this world has many scenes and objects which to our misjudging minds appear splendid, many which appear imposing, many which appear attractive and interesting. By these scenes and objects your passions are often excited, your affections entangled, your minds thrown into a feverish state, which is exceedingly unfriendly to progress in religion. The great question is, how shall the pernicious influence of these worldly scenes and objects be counteracted? I answer, the world to come, the unseen, spiritual and eternal world, has scenes incomparably more grand, more imposing, more interesting than any which this world can exhibit. All that is wanting then, is to bring them clearly before the mind. Let it be a part of your daily employment to do this. Enter your closet, open the Scriptures, and fix on some one of the many interesting objects which they reveal; the translation of Elijah for instance, or our Saviour's transfiguration, or his death, or his resurrection, or his ascension to heaven, or his sec-

ond coming. Fix the eye of your mind attentively on the object selected; spread it before you with all its attending circumstances; call in the aid of imagination, or that power which forms images of absent, or invisible things; pray for faith, and continue to meditate, if possible, till you obtain some clear, realizing apprehension of the scene before you, or till your hearts are suitably affected by it. Then when the mind is filled and the heart occupied by such an object, you may, relying on the divine protection, venture out into the world, and all its wealth, its pomp and its pleasures will appear contemptible indeed, compared with the scenes which you have been contemplating.

In this way, and in this alone, can you maintain a successful combat with the world, and finally obtain a decided victory over it; for until your minds are pre-occupied by spiritual objects, the world will find them empty and rush in upon them like a flood. Let me beseech those of you who have not already done it, to make trial of this method during the month on which you have now entered. Be not discouraged, should your first attempts prove unsuccessful; but persevere, and instead of faintly remembering Christ at his table only, you will remember him almost constantly; you will feel in some measure as the apostles did, when they returned from witnessing his ascension; and fortified by the powers of the world to come, you will be enabled to tread the present world under your feet.

SERMON LVIII.

CHRIST'S VICTORY OVER SATAN.

When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. — Luke xi. 21, 22.

For this purpose, says St. John, was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. In conformity with this gracious design, we find that he no sooner made his appearance on earth, than he began to cast out Satan, from his strong holds in the bodies of men, by healing those who were possessed, oppressed and vexed with devils; thus exhibiting a glorious and convincing proof of his power and willingness to save those, whose souls were enslaved by these powers of darkness. The Scribes and Pharisees, however, unable to deny the reality of these miracles, and unwilling to allow his divine authority, blasphemously pretended that he cast out devils by a power derived from Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. In answer to this, our blessed Saviour replies, that every kingdom divided against itself is quickly brought to desolation; and that, therefore, if Satan be divided against himself; if he thus cast out himself as they pretended, his kingdom could not stand, but must soon fall and have an end. Having thus answered these groundless and impious pretences, he proceeds in our text to spiritualize the subject, by employing it to illustrate the necessity, nature, and design of that deliverance and redemp-

tion, which it was the great object of his mission to accomplish. In this passage he gives us to understand, that the soul of every unconverted sinner is a palace, of which Satan, as a strong man armed, keeps an entire and peaceable possession; and that when sinners are convinced and converted, Christ, who alone is stronger than this strong man, strips him of his armor, casts him out and divides his spoils. To illustrate these particulars, and notice the instruction which they afford, is the design of the following discourse.

In the prosecution of this design we would observe,

That the human soul may be justly compared to a palace; for it is a most beautiful, noble and magnificent edifice; an edifice formed of imperishable materials; an edifice fearfully, admirably, wonderfully made. It is a house not made with hands, a building of God, the master-piece of the all-wise and all-powerful Architect, who formed and adorned it for his own use. It is sufficiently capacious to contain not only the whole creation, but even the Creator himself; for it was especially designed to be the earthly residence of that high and holy One, who fills immensity and inhabits eternity. Even now, debased, disfigured and polluted as it is by sin, it bears the evident marks of original grandeur and beauty; and, as the poet observes of Beelzebub, is majestic though in ruins. Of this magnificent and stately structure, thus originally built and adorned for the habitation of God, Satan now, as a strong man armed, keeps possession. This proposition contains three particulars which deserve our attention: First, we may observe, that of every unrenewed soul, Satan keeps perfect and entire possession. Secondly, he keeps possession as a strong man. Thirdly, he keeps possession as a strong man armed.

I. Of every unconverted soul, Satan keeps perfect and entire possession. This is a truth which, however mortifying it may be to our pride, is too plainly taught in the word of God, to be denied by any who acknowledge the divine authority of this sacred volume. We are there told, that all who live according to the common course of this world, live according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now worketh in the children of disobedience. Hence it appears, that, as God by his Spirit works in Christians both to will and to do, according to his own good pleasure, so Satan, the father of lies, works

powerfully and effectually in the hearts of impenitent sinners; causing them to listen to his suggestions, comply with his temptations, and fulfil his designs.

Our blessed Saviour also told the Jews, that they were of their father, the devil, and that the lusts of their father they would do; and to this he adds, that he who committeth sin, is the servant or slave of sin. When Christ called Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles, he gave him a commission to turn them from the power of Satan to God; which evidently proves that in their natural state, they were subject to the power of this arch deceiver and apostate; and that from this power they must be delivered, before they could receive an inheritance among them that are sanctified. St. Paul himself informs us, that all who oppose the truth are entangled in the snares of Satan, and are led captive by him at his will; and that it is he who blinds the minds of all who believe not, lest the glorious light of the gospel should shine in upon them. From other passages we learn, that it was he who put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ, and tempted Ananias and Sapphira to commit the crime which cost them their lives. In short, so absolute and universal is his control over sinful men, that he is often, both by our Saviour and his apostles, styled the prince, the ruler, and the god of this world.

And, my friends, even if the word of God had been silent on this subject, would not reason and experience have led us to adopt this conclusion? Is it not evident that a large proportion of mankind, conduct as if they were the willing subjects of the father of lies? Are not his laws, which enjoin it upon us to hate our enemies, to revenge insults, to envy rivals, to love the world, to please ourselves, to slander others, to fulfil the desires of the flesh and the mind, to forget our Maker, neglect his word, transgress his commands and reject his Son; incomparably more regarded, more obeyed, than the law of God, which commands us to love our Creator, to do to others as we wish them to do to us, to love him supremely, to forgive and pray for our enemies, to deny ourselves, to renounce the world, take up the cross and follow Christ?

Should this foe of God and man publish a revelation of his own mind and will, issue his orders, and promulgate his decrees to mankind, would he not urge them to live just as they now

do! Would he not tell the young to put off the thought of death, to neglect religion, to conform to the world, to give themselves up without restraint to the pursuit of frivolous pleasures and amusements, serving divers lusts and vanities? Would he not charge the middle aged to seek first the good things of this life, instead of the kingdom of God and his righteousness; to lay up treasures on earth and not in heaven; to rise early, sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness; and put off religion to old age? Would he not command all ages and ranks in society to spend the Sabbath in idleness; in reading foolish, frivolous or pernicious books; in transacting, or at least thinking of their worldly business; in unprofitable visits or useless conversation; instead of employing it in attending to the great things which concern their everlasting peace? Would he not charge them when in the house of God, to let their thoughts wander after vanities, to neglect or forget the truth which is proclaimed, or to apply it to their neighbors instead of themselves? Would he not enjoin it upon them to neglect the word of God, and to trust in their own righteousness; or assure them, as he did our first parents, that though they transgress and eat forbidden fruit, yet they shall not surely die? Would he not especially charge those who begin to think seriously of religion, to dismiss all such melancholy and superstitious fancies, and either to give themselves no concern respecting eternity, or at least defer it to a more convenient season? In a word, would he not direct mankind to love themselves supremely, to do their own pleasure, obey their own inclinations, seek their own exaltation profit and honor, and, without regarding what God has said, to cast off his fear and restrain prayer before him, walking in the way of their own hearts, and according to the sight of their own eyes? Yes, my friends, these are the secret wishes of Satan, these would be his commands, should he publish a code of laws; and hence it is but too evident that mankind obey him, that he is the god of this world, and keeps entire possession of every unconverted soul. But,

II. Of such souls he keeps possession as a strong man. This will appear evident if we consider that he can neither be restrained, subdued, or driven out by any created power. 1st. By created power he cannot be restrained or subdued. In the story of the man among the tombs, who was possessed by an

evil spirit, we are told that he was often bound with chains and fetters, yet he easily broke all these bonds, so that no man could tame or subdue him. So it is with those of whose souls Satan keeps possession; they can be bound or restrained by no laws or regulations, human or divine. Their language concerning the Son of God is, We will not have this man to reign over us. Let us break his bands asunder and cast away his cords from us. In vain does God present to their breasts the curse of the law, like a flaming sword; they rush upon its sharp point and are sure to perish. In vain does he place before them the fire that never shall be quenched; they throw themselves headlong into its devouring flames. In vain does he endeavor to bind them with the bands of gratitude and the cords of love; they break them, as Samson broke the cords of the Philistines, with which he was bound. In vain does he endeavor to restrain them by the warnings of conscience, and the remonstrances of his Spirit; they regard them no more than the spider's web. If divine restraints are thus insufficient, it cannot be expected that human laws will avail. Though by the aid of prisons, scourges and gibbets, external crimes may be partially prevented, yet where is the lawgiver to be found, who has been able to restrain wandering thoughts, to keep down the secret workings of envy, pride, selfishness and revenge; or even to chain up a false and slanderous tongue?

And as neither divine nor human laws can restrain or subdue the strong man, who reigns in the sinner's breast, so neither can the sinner himself effect this, by any exertions of his own. It is true, indeed, he could do this if he would; but alas he has no will to do it, for his will is entirely on the side of Satan, who has bound it in fetters, too strong to be broken. He is not only a captive, but a willing captive. He is pleased with his slavery, and fancies there is music in the rattling of his chains. Like the Jews, he is ready to say, I was never in bondage; and, like them, he has no wish to be free; so that he alone who says to the roaring billows, Thus far shall ye come and no farther, is able to restrain the rage and malice of Satan, and lay his hand on the strong corruptions of the human heart.

III. If no created power can bind or restrain the strong man who reigns in the sinner's heart, much less can this power prevail to cast him out. This the ministers of Christ too often find

by painful experience. They call upon sinners in the name of the Lord, to turn from their evil ways and live; but the god of this world, the strong man armed, blinds their eyes, stops their ears, and hardens their hearts, so that they call in vain. Like our Saviour's disciples when he was upon the mount, they charge this dumb and deaf spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, to come out; but he ridicules their authority, and laughs at their efforts. In vain do they employ threatenings and promises, commands and entreaties, arguments and motives, prayers and tears. The strong man still keeps possession, notwithstanding their most vigorous efforts. Without divine assistance, Paul and Apollos may labor in vain, and spend their strength for naught. Still less can the moralist or the philosopher force him from his palace. They may declaim eloquently and copiously on the beauty and fitness of virtue, and the deformity of vice; but it is like attempting to charm the deaf adder, who will not hear, or regard the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.

Even the sinner himself cannot cast out this powerful tyrant, who has obtained such complete dominion over him. True indeed, as we observed before, he is so well pleased with his bondage, that he seldom wishes for or seeks deliverance. But at times, conscience alarms him by her reproaches; he finds that the ways of transgressors are hard; he dreads what the end of these things will be; and therefore forms some weak resolutions, and makes some faint efforts, to root out the tyrant of his breast, and recover his liberty. But if these efforts are made in his own strength, they are always in vain; and, like all ineffectual efforts to throw off the yoke of oppression, they only render it more grievous and difficult to break. Even if the evil spirit appears to be cast out for a time, and an external reformation takes place, he soon returns, bringing with him seven other spirits, still more wicked: so that the latter end of such a man is worse than the first. With the utmost propriety, therefore, may Satan, who thus keeps possession of the sinner's heart, be represented as a strong man. But,

III. He keeps possession, not only as a strong man, but as a strong man armed. He has his armor, both offensive and defensive; and with this he defends and fortifies his palace in the soul, and attempts to make it strong against the Captain of our

salvation. This armor is directly the reverse of that Christian armor which St. Paul describes, in his Epistle to the Ephesians. Instead of being girded with the girdle of truth, he girds the sinner with the girdle of error, falsehood and deceit. Instead of the breastplate of Christ's righteousness, he furnishes him with a breastplate of his own fancied righteousness, goodness and morality. Instead of the shield of faith, which the Christian possesses, the sinner has the shield of unbelief; and with this he defends himself against the threatenings and curses of the law, and all the arrows of conviction, which are aimed at him by the ministers of Christ. Instead of having on for a helmet the hope of salvation, by faith in the Saviour's blood, Satan furnishes his subjects with a false hope of obtaining salvation at last, let them live as they please; and instead of the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, he teaches them to wield the sword of a tongue set on fire of hell, and furnishes them with a magazine of cavils, sneers, excuses and objections, with which they attack religion and defend themselves. He also builds for them many refuges of lies, in which, as in a strong castle, they fondly hope to shelter themselves from the wrath of God.

Having thus shown that the unrenewed soul is a palace, of which Satan, as a strong man armed, keeps possession, we proceed to observe,

IV. That while he thus keeps possession, his goods, or in other words, his subjects, are at peace. Not, however, that impenitent sinners now enjoy, or ever will enjoy true peace of mind; for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. No, they are constantly and anxiously seeking rest, and vainly inquiring, who will show us any good? and their repeated disappointments, cares and perplexities, together with their unruly appetites, passions and desires, render their minds like the troubled sea which cannot rest. But the peace which the subjects of Satan enjoy, consists in these two particulars: (1.) They are seldom if ever much alarmed respecting their own salvation. Like madmen, who fancy themselves kings and emperors, the sinner thinks that he is rich and increased in goods, and has need of nothing; and does not in the least suspect that he is poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. He has a good opinion of himself, suspects no danger, thinks little of death or

eternity; or if he does, fancies that he is already prepared, and that there is no cause of anxiety or alarm. True he may, occasionally, notwithstanding his armor, be slightly wounded by the arrows of conviction, or he may hear the curses and terrors of the law proclaimed by God's ministers, when they lift up their voices as a trumpet, to warn him of his transgressions; but he listens to them as to the noise of distant thunder, which, though it rolls over the heads of others, threatens no danger to himself, and is quickly forgotten amid the hurry and bustle of worldly pursuits.

(2.) The sinner enjoys peace, because there is nothing in his soul to take the part of God against Satan, and thus produce intestine war and commotion. All his powers and faculties are leagued against God, on the side of sin, unless we except his conscience, and this soon becomes seared and stupefied, so that its voice is seldom heard. There is consequently in the sinner's breast none of that inward warfare which the Christian feels, no lusting of the flesh against the spirit, and of the spirit against the flesh. In this respect all is calm and peaceful within, but, alas, it is the calmness and peace of spiritual death.

His understanding, his will, his affections and imagination are all chained up in spiritual bondage, darkness and death. The foe of God and man reigns supreme and uncontrolled on the throne of his heart; all his mental and corporeal faculties are so many instruments of unrighteousness, to displease and dishonor his Maker; yet he is careless and secure, suspects no danger, and, while hardening himself against God, hopes to prosper. Such is the deplorable situation of every unawakened, impenitent sinner; and such it ever will be, unless Christ, who is stronger than the strong man armed, by the power of his Spirit and grace, comes upon him, overcomes him, takes from him his armor, and divides his spoils.

In the description here given of the great and glorious victory which Christ obtains over the god of this world, when he casts him out from the soul of which he has taken possession, we may notice, in the first place, that he comes upon him unawares. Never does the sinner begin to seek Christ, unless Christ begins to seek the sinner; for we are assured there are none who ever seek after God. But when our blessed Saviour comes with the godlike design of delivering the captive from the hand of the

mighty, he girds on his sword, and rides forth prosperously in his chariot of salvation, arrayed in meekness, truth and righteousness; and in a moment when the sinner perhaps least expects or wishes it, he suddenly feels the arrows of conviction sharp in his heart. Then his false peace is at an end. Conscience no longer sleeps; he no longer hears as though he heard not; the blind eyes begin to open, the stony heart begins to melt. The weapons of Christ's ministers, which are not carnal but spiritual, then become mighty, through God, to cast down all his high thoughts and imaginations, and he for the first time finds himself a poor, miserable, helpless captive, a wretched, self-condemned sinner; and all within is remorse, anxiety and alarm.

Again: In farther carrying on this glorious work, the Captain of our salvation takes from the strong man armed all the armor in which he trusted. He strips the sinner of the breastplate of self-righteousness, causes the shield of unbelief to fall from his hand, takes away the false hopes of salvation which composed his helmet, quenches the fiery sword of an inflamed tongue, scatters all his magazines of cavils, excuses and objections, and beats down the refuges of lies in which he trusted.

Once more: Satan being thus baffled and disarmed, the triumphant conqueror proceeds to divide his spoils. The soul, which was once his palace, is transformed into the habitation of Christ, and a meet temple for the Holy Spirit of God. All his mental and corporeal faculties are now transformed into instruments of righteousness, to serve and glorify God. His time, his talents, his property, himself and all that he has, are consecrated to the work of obedience and praise. This is the work, and these the spoils of the conqueror.

My friends, what a glorious change is here! That soul, which was once the palace, the castle and strong hold of Satan, the den of every unclean and hateful lust, is now the temple of God, and filled with the graces of his Spirit. The wretched slaves of sin, chained up in spiritual darkness and death, ignorant of their danger, pleased with their situation, and not even wishing to be delivered, are now brought into the glorious light and liberty, and adopted as the children of God. The distracted sinner, who, like the man possessed among the tombs, once madly endeavored to wound and eternally destroy his own soul,

by his vices, now sits as a humble disciple at the feet of Jesus, clothed with his righteousness, adorned with his graces, and in his right mind. Surely none but God alone can produce a change as happy and glorious as this. Surely there may well be joy in heaven to behold it.

Permit me now, by way of improvement, to remind you, my Christian friends, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, of the time when Satan, as a strong man armed, kept possession of your hearts, and led you captive at his will, while you were at peace and feared no danger. Remember how you were then pleased and satisfied with your bondage; how you loved darkness; how long you resisted and grieved the Spirit of God; how you were wont to say to him who came to accomplish your deliverance, What have we to do with thee? Remember these things and then consider what you owe to Him who has done such great things for you.

Remember these things, and then consider how you ought to pity and pray for those miserable captives who are yet in that deplorable bondage, exposed to endless perdition, and yet are at peace and satisfied with their condition. Remember these things, and let the remembrance increase your humility, inflame your love, and animate your soul, and cause you to be as active, cheerful, diligent, and persevering in the service of God, as you formerly were in the service of Satan.

From those who have been brought out of darkness and slavery into the glorious liberty of the children of God, we would next turn to those who are still in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. You are perhaps ready, my friends, to pity, if not despise the Christian, on account of the restraints and obligations under which he is laid by his belief; but in reality, he has infinitely more reason to pity and weep over you. The service of the Christian is perfect liberty; for Christ's commandments are not grievous, but his yoke is easy and his burden light. His service also is honorable, and will receive a rich reward; for he serves the King of kings and Lord of lords, who will give him a crown of glory and eternal life.

But you, who boast of your liberty, are enslaved in worse than Egyptian bondage. You serve and obey the father of lies; you live just as he would have you, and he doubtless exults, with diabolical joy and triumph, to see his miserable victims,

whom he leads captive at his will, proud and pleased with their chains, and running thoughtless and secure the broad road to ruin.

But his service, which you thus love is not only base and dishonorable, but ruinous and destructive; for the wages he bestows is eternal death. Yet by his diabolical art he has so blinded your minds, that you believe not. You think there is no danger; the gospel is hid from you, as it is from those who are lost; and unless the blessed Redeemer, who is stronger than the strong man armed, should see fit in infinite mercy, to come and open your eyes, and turn you from the power of Satan to God, you will continue careless and secure, conformed to the world, and pursuing its pleasures, riches and honors, till you open your eyes too late in eternity.

From this state, my friends, we cannot deliver you. We cannot even convince you that you are in such a state, and probably many of you have heard the present discourse, without the smallest suspicion that it is a description of your own character and situation. But this false peace and security, instead of proving that you are safe, only proves more clearly your danger. It proves that the strong man armed is not disturbed in his possession, but that he keeps you in peace. Another thing which clearly proves this, is, that even now you are using the armor of the god of this world, to defend yourselves against the truth which we are delivering. Some of you are putting on as a defence, the breastplate of self-righteousness, and pretending that you cannot possibly be so bad as is now represented. Others are holding up the shield of unbelief to defend themselves against the terrors of the law, and resolving that they will not believe their situation to be such as has now been described, or that the word of God is literally and strictly true. Others again are putting on the helmet of a false hope of salvation, though they continue in sin; while some, perhaps, are ready to bring forward the magazine of cavils, objections and excuses with which the father of lies furnishes them.

But, my friends, if any of you are trusting to this armor, you are trusting to the armor of Satan; and though it may defend you from the arrows of conviction now, yet it will not defend you, hereafter, against those bolts of divine indignation, which will fall, like blasting lightnings, on the head of the guilty.

There will be no unbelief in hell, for even the devils believe and tremble. Instead then of uniting with the foe of God and man to destroy your own souls, by madly hardening yourselves against God, and contending with the Almighty, let me entreat you instantly to throw down the weapons of your rebellion, and cry earnestly to Him who is able to save; to deliver you from the strong man armed, who now keeps possession of your souls. This he is ever willing and ready to do; for it was the great object of his coming on earth, as he himself declares: The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and to set at liberty them that are bruised. Awake then to a sense of your situation; no longer indulge that false peace which will prove your destruction; but awake; arise; make a struggle for liberty now, or expect to remain forever the slaves of Satan, prisoners in the regions of despair, under chains of everlasting darkness. Trust not however to your own struggles, but apply to Him who alone is able to overcome the god of this world. Look to Him for help, and you will not be disappointed, for his grace is sufficient for you.

And you, my Christian friends, if you have relatives who are possessed by a dumb spirit, so that they will not pray, or a deaf spirit, so that they will not hear, or who have been long bound as it were in fetters of brass, by the powers of darkness, bring them to Jesus. Cry unto him like the woman of Canaan, Lord Jesus have mercy and heal my friends, who are ensnared, enslaved and vexed by an evil spirit; and though he appear to heed you not, to treat you unkindly, or to give you no answer, yet be not discouraged. Continue to plead, and hope all things from his infinite compassion.

SERMON LIX.

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR THE CHURCH.

Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians v. 25—27.

In his epistles to the Corinthians, St. Paul informs us that he determined to know or make known, nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Did he then intend so to confine himself to the doctrines of the cross, as to say nothing, in his preaching, of moral duties? By no means. All his epistles prove that he did not. But he intended to illustrate and enforce moral duties in an evangelical manner, by motives and illustrations derived from the cross of Christ. A striking instance of this we have in the context, in which he explains and inculcates the duties of husbands and wives. We should be ready, at first view, to imagine that these duties have nothing to do with the doctrines of the gospel, and that they must be enforced by considerations derived from some other quarter. But the Apostle shows us that this would be a mistake. By alluding to the union between Christ and his church, he illustrates and enforces the duties of the married state in the most clear and striking manner possible. Wives, says he, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord: for the husband is the head of the wife, even as

Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore, as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Thus, you see, that even while inculcating the duties resulting from the married state, the Apostle still adhered to his determination to preach nothing but Christ and him crucified.

In the passage thus introduced we have four things which deserve our attention:

I. The *object* of Christ's love; the CHURCH.

II. The *proof* of his love; *he gave himself for it.*

III. The *design* of his love; that he might *sanctify, cleanse* and present it to himself a glorious and spotless church.

IV. The *means* by which he effects this; the *washing of water and the word.* A few reflections on these several particulars, will compose the following discourse.

I. Let us consider the object of Christ's love; the church. By the church here, you are doubtless sensible is not meant any particular church, as the church at Rome, at Corinth or Ephesus, but the church universal. You are also probably aware that the church universal which Christ loved, and for which he died, does not include all the members of his visible church, who are united to him by an external profession; for the Scriptures clearly teach, and melancholy experience incontestibly proves, that many of these are insincere, and either wilfully deceive others, or are deceived themselves. It is therefore the real, invisible church which is here intended, including all who ever have believed, or who ever will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a true and living faith; all, in a word, who were given to him by his Father in the covenant of redemption. In this covenant God promised his Son, that if he would make his soul an offering for sin, he should have a seed, and a people to serve him, and that this people should be made willing to serve him in the day of his power. Of these persons Christ speaks, when he says, all that the Father hath given me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. To

these also he refers in his last prayer: I have manifested thy name to them which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were and thou gavest them me. I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. Neither pray I for these alone, but for all them also, who shall believe on me through their word. From these passages it appears, that the church, which was given to Christ, the church which he loves and for which he prays, includes all who did then believe, and all who should afterwards believe on him to the end of time. If any doubt this, and allege that Christ loves and prays for none till they actually become members of his visible church, we would refer them to the tenth chapter of John. We there find Christ saying, I am the good Shepherd, and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, who are not of this fold. Them also I must bring; and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; or in other words, one church and one head. Here Christ evidently speaks of some of his sheep, who had not yet been brought into his fold, or visible church; and at the same time predicts that they shall be brought in, in due time. He does not therefore love persons, because they are members of his church; but they become members of his church, because he first loved them as given to him by his Father. Agreeably we find him saying to his disciples, Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. And again he says to them, As the Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you. But he elsewhere tells us, that his Father loved him before the foundation of the world. If then he loves his disciples, even as the Father loves him, he must have loved them before the foundation of the world; and he may justly say to all his real disciples, as he does to his ancient church, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. And as this love of God to his Son is sincere, ardent, constant and unchangeable, such must be the love of Christ to his church. This leads us to consider, as was proposed,

II. The proof of Christ's love to his church; He gave himself for it. Observe what he gave; not merely his time, not his exertions, not his perfections, but himself, his whole self, without the least reserve. Such was the greatness, the intensity of his

love for his church, that he devoted to it his body, his soul, his blood, his very life, to be disposed of as its welfare required. Observe too, to what he gave himself. He gave himself up to disgrace and ignominy. Though he was in the form of God and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he humbled and made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and suffered himself to be despised and rejected of men. He gave himself up to the most abject poverty: Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich. He gave himself up to sorrow, suffering, shame and reproach. All they that see me, says he, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, he trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting. Behold and see, all ye that pass by, if there be any sorrow like my sorrow. He was indeed a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He gave himself up into the hands of his bitterest and most implacable enemies. This is above all things disagreeable and hateful to nature. Few things can be conceived of more abhorrent to our feelings, than to be delivered into the power of raging, insulting, blood-thirsty foes, who will exhaust all the arts of cruelty in tormenting us, and mock our dying agonies with scoffs, revilings, and the exclamations of savage triumph. What, my friends, could induce you to throw yourselves into a dark and loathsome pit, filled with deadly serpents, scorpions, and other poisonous and disgusting reptiles, all brandishing their envenomed stings, and eager to devour you? Yet this world, into which the Son of God voluntarily descended for our sakes, was far more hateful, dreadful, and loathsome to his holy nature, than such a pit would be to us; and the poisonous rage of serpents and scorpions, is far inferior in malignity and in the sufferings which it can inflict, to that rancorous enmity which exists in the hearts of sinners, to which Christ gave himself up.

Nor was this all. He also gave himself up to the powers of darkness, who harassed and tormented his mind, incomparably

worse than men could his body. The prince of this world, said he, cometh. He saw him approaching; approaching to fill his soul with unutterable anguish, and fulfil the prediction that he should bruise Christ's heel, that is his human nature. We see in the case of Job what the powers of darkness can do, and how unspeakably they can torture and distract the soul, even while controlled by divine power. What then must Christ have suffered from them, when they were permitted without restraint, to exert all their rage and cruelty to destroy him, if possible; and if not, to increase to the utmost his wretchedness. Yet to this Christ gave himself up for his church.

But the proofs of his love do not end here. He also gave himself up to the wrath of God; to the curse of his broken law. He surrendered himself up as a sinner into the hands of incensed justice; and while he thus stood in the sinner's place, God treated him as if he had been a sinner. He hid his face from him; set the terrors of his wrath in array against him, made him the mark of those arrows, the poison of which drinks up the spirits, and plunged the flaming sword deep in his inmost soul. In this, the very essence of his sufferings consisted. All that men and devils could do, he bore without a groan. But when the weight of divine wrath crushed him down, when his Father's face was hidden from his view; and he beheld him only in the character of an awful, holy, avenging God, as a consuming fire to sinful creatures, then his anguish could no longer be concealed, but burst forth in that heart-rending exclamation, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!

Such were the sufferings which Christ endured for the sake of his church; such the proofs of love which he has given it. And what proofs can be conceived of, more strong or satisfactory? We think it a proof of love to perform acts of kindness to others, when we can do it without much personal suffering or inconvenience. Should we redeem a friend from slavery at the expense of our whole fortune, we should expect that his gratitude for such a proof of affection, would cease but with his life. And should we sacrifice our life to preserve his, it would be acknowledged by all that we had given the strongest possible evidence of our love; for greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend. Yet all this would be nothing, and less than nothing in comparison with what

Christ has done for his church; with what he has done, not for friends, but for rebels and enemies. Well then may he commend the greatness of his love, in that while we were enemies, he died for us,—died such a death as no one ever suffered or can suffer. I am aware, however, that we are prone to evade these proofs of his love, by imagining that pain, shame, and death, were not so terrible to Christ, as they are to us. But this is a gross mistake. He had the same natural aversion to these evils, the same unwillingness to suffer them, which we have; and nothing but love, the most ardent and intense, could have conquered this unwillingness, and led him, patient and resigned as a lamb, to the slaughter. We proceed now to consider,

III. His design in thus giving himself for his church. It was to sanctify, cleanse, and present it to himself a glorious and spotless church, without the least moral defilement.

You need not be told that love naturally desires the society of the object beloved. Since then Christ loves his church, he cannot but desire that it should be with him where he is; and agreeably, we find him in his last prayer soliciting this favor of his Father. But before his church can reside with him in heaven, it is necessary that it should be prepared for those holy mansions; for we are told that nothing which defileth can enter there, and every member of his church is originally defiled by the pollutions of sin. He himself compares it, in its natural state, to a naked, polluted, helpless infant, cast out to perish in its blood. Such was the state in which he foresaw his church, when it first became the object of his love; and from this state, it was the design of his sufferings and death to raise it. It is styled his body, his members, and he intends that this body shall be like the head, perfectly holy, harmless, and undefiled. It is also styled his bride, his consort, his spouse, and he intends that his bride shall be made worthy of such a husband. Every member of his church must therefore be perfectly freed from all corporeal weaknesses and infirmities; from all spiritual blemishes and imperfections. Their bodies must be changed, and made like unto his glorious body, and their spirits rendered perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect. The work by which this glorious transformation is to be effected, is already begun in the hearts of all who believe, and will in due time be fully accomplished. And the same work will commence, and be carried on to per-

fection in the hearts of all who shall believe on him hereafter. And when his mystical body is complete, when every member of it is brought into his church, then the Lord of the world will come. Then Christ will appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The bodies of his people will be raised incorruptible and immortal, and be caught up by angels to meet their Lord in the air; where the whole multitude of the redeemed will be presented to him as a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, and perfectly prepared to accompany their Redeemer to heaven, and there live and reign with him forever and ever. Then will the design for which he gave himself up to poverty, pain, shame and death, be fully accomplished, and he will see the glorious fruits of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. This leads us to consider, as was proposed,

IV. The means by which Christ accomplishes this great work. The apostle in our text mentions two, the washing of water, and the word. What is here called the washing of water, is in another passage styled the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. That the influences of the Holy Spirit are very frequently compared to water, you need not be told; and the reason of this comparison is, that as water cleanses the body from pollution, so the Holy Spirit purifies the soul from the defilement of sin. By the washing of water, in our text, is therefore intended the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit, by which every real member of the church of Christ is renewed in the spirit of his mind, and sanctified or cleansed from moral pollution. Agreeably the apostle writes to the members of the Corinthian church, Ye are washed, ye are justified ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. These sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit Christ procured for his church, by his sufferings and death. When he ascended on high, leading captivity captive, he received gifts for men, and of these gifts the Holy Spirit was the principal. This gift he is constantly pouring out upon his church in showers of divine grace, to sanctify and cleanse it, agreeably to his promise in the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel: Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. The instrumental means by which this great work is effected,

is the word of God. His church are sanctified and cleansed *with* the Spirit, but *by* the word; for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. This word is the grand instrument by which the Spirit of God awakens the future members of Christ's church, from spiritual slumber, convinces them of their naturally sinful and miserable condition, and creates them anew, or regenerates them to a new life. Hence they are said to be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. The work of sanctification, thus begun by the instrumentality of the word, is carried on to perfection by means of the same word, agreeably to our Saviour's petition to his Father, Sanctify them through thy truth.

The subject we have been considering is full of consolation to the church of Christ; but we cannot partake of this consolation, unless we have a well-grounded hope that we are real members of his church. We may be members of his visible church, and yet have no connection with his real church; and some present may be members of his real church whose doubts respecting their own character have hitherto prevented them from uniting with his visible church. Let us then improve this subject,

1. For self-examination, that we may ascertain whether we truly belong to the church of Christ or not. You have already been reminded, that Christ gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it from all pollution. If, then, you are real members of his church, he has already begun this glorious work in your hearts. He has awakened you from your slumbers, convinced you that you are guilty, miserable sinners, wholly polluted by the defilements of sin, entirely unfit to enter heaven, and justly exposed to everlasting condemnation, without any possibility of escaping it by your own merits. He has also renewed you in the spirit of your minds, caused you to hate, loathe, and repent of your sins, to embrace him as your only Saviour by a living faith, and to long, and pray, and strive after universal holiness. In one word, he has made you new creatures; for if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Now if this great change has been effected in your hearts, you are real members of the church of Christ, whether you belong to his visible church or not; and if you do not, you may, and you

ought to unite yourself to it without delay; for Christ loves and has given himself for you. Hence,

2. Those who have reason to hope that they belong to the real church of Christ, may improve this subject for their encouragement and consolation. To all such it does indeed afford abundant cause for rejoicing. You may each one of you say, with confidence, Christ loves me. Yes, the Son of God, the Creator of the world, the brightness of his Father's glory, the chief among ten thousand in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily, condescends to love me, a poor sinful worm of the dust; loves me better than I love my parents, better than I love my children, better than I love brother or sister or friend; nay, better than I love myself; loves me with a love stronger than death and lasting as eternity. He not only loves me, but has given himself for me; has died that I may live; live forever with him in heaven. And is not this cause of rejoicing? If the most amiable and excellent of the human race would become your friend and companion, would you not rejoice? If this most amiable and excellent friend was also a powerful monarch, able to defend, enrich, and load you with honors, would you not rejoice still more. How then ought the Christian to rejoice in the love of Him who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, who is the perfection of uncreated excellence, glory, and beauty; whose love knows no bounds, no interruption, intermission or end; who possesses unerring wisdom to guide, and omnipotent power to defend them. Surely, my Christian hearers, if you will not rejoice in the love of such a friend, you can rejoice in nothing. Well may the apostle call upon you to rejoice in the Lord, to rejoice in the Lord always, to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. What if you are poor? In possessing such a Friend, you possess all things. What if you have no other friends! Is not such a Friend enough to satisfy you? Is he not worthy of all your affection, and will he not more than return it? Rejoice then in your eternal, almighty, unchangeable Friend, and begin now to sing the song of the redeemed, exclaiming, Now unto him that was slain, that loved us, and gave himself for us, and redeemed us to God by his blood, be ascribed riches, and honor and glory, and power and blessing.

3. While you thus rejoice in Christ's love, endeavor to return

it. Strive to love with your whole hearts him who first loved you. Give your whole selves to him who has already given himself for you. Remember that you are no longer your own, for you are bought with a price. Glorify him then in your souls and bodies which are his; and let his love constrain you to live for him who died for you. Surely, if his love does not constrain you thus to live, it must be because you do not realize it. Surely, you cannot refuse to love and live to him, who is so infinitely lovely, and who loves you with such an intense and unalterable affection, notwithstanding all your unworthiness, His language to you is, as my Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. I have not called you servants, but friends, and then are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. O then, love, love and praise with all your powers this infinitely gracious, condescending and affectionate friend, who declares that though mothers should forget and cease to love their infants, he will not forget or cease to love his church. Let our love to him be equally unchanging. Though parents should forget their children, and children cease to love their parents; though the titles of brother and sister, husband and wife, should cease to excite affection; though every other tie should be dissolved, and all other love banished from the earth, yet never let the church cease to love him who has loved and given himself for it.

4. While you have this friend, be careful to trust in his love, to confide in him unreservedly without the least anxiety, doubt or suspicion. You well know that nothing grieves us more than the jealousies and suspicions of our friends, that we do not love them. Beware then that you do not grieve this best of friends, by indulging them. He surely has a right to be believed, when he professes to love his people, since he has already given them such strong and infallible proofs of his affection. His promises and assurances come to us sealed with his own life-blood; and if he loved us and gave himself for us while we were yet enemies, how shall he not also with himself freely give us all things. We appeal to yourselves, would he who has freely given you his blood, his life; he who has suffered so much for your sakes; would he deny you more wealth, more friends, more temporal comforts, if he saw that they would prove really beneficial? Would he ever afflict you, if it were not absolutely

necessary for your good? To die for you, cost him much; to give you mere temporal blessings would cost him nothing. Since then he has done the former, can he be unwilling to do the latter? If his love has led him to do that which was most difficult, will it not lead him to do what is most easy? And has he not promised that he will withhold from you no good thing? that he will cause all things to work together for your good? that he will never leave you nor forsake you? Why then, oh ye of little faith, why do ye doubt? Why do you distress yourselves and grieve him by needless anxieties respecting what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, or how you shall be carried through the trials and difficulties which are before you in your way to heaven? Banish, I beseech you, all your groundless fears and anxieties. Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you; and while you love and praise him for all that is past, so trust him for all that is to come.

5. Did Christ give himself for the church with a view to render it perfectly holy, without any blemish or imperfection? How strong then are our obligations, and how great our encouragement, to aim at universal holiness. What, oh Christian, do you above all things desire? Is it not to be holy as Christ is holy, and to be with him where he is? And does not he ardently desire the same? Did he not give himself for you for this very purpose, that he might sanctify, cleanse, and present you to himself, perfectly glorious and holy? And will he fail of accomplishing his purpose? No; as certainly as Christ has died, so certainly shall every real member of his church, every one who truly hates and mourns for sin, be presented to him at last, freed from every spot and blemish. Arise, then, ye who are weak, wounded, and desponding, and renew the conflict with sin. While endeavoring to subdue it, you are fighting the battles of Christ; you are engaged in a cause which is dear to him; you are contending with his enemies, as well as yours; he has determined that they must and shall be conquered. Fight then courageously a short time longer, and the victory shall be certainly yours. The object of Christ's death must not, shall not, cannot be frustrated; but every member of his real church shall be made perfectly like him, and see him as he is. Soon will the blessed day arrive, when he will present to himself the whole church of his redeemed, as a glorious

church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. In this number you will then be found, and sit down with him forever at his marriage supper in heaven. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, comfort and encourage one another in your Christian warfare with these words.

Lastly, Does Christ thus love his church? How desirable then is it, my impenitent hearers, that you should become members of it, and thus share in his love. Mistake me not, however. We wish not to induce you to make a hypocritical profession; for this would not render you members of his church. But we wish you to unite yourselves to his real church; to join yourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. Till you do this, you have no right to hope for a share in the blessings which Christ has purchased; but having done this, you shall finally become members of the church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and be partakers of the glory that shall be there revealed.

SERMON LX.

CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR OF THE LOST.

The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.
LUKE xix. 10.

THERE cannot, my friends, be a more striking and satisfactory proof of our stupid insensibility to religious truth, than the indifference with which we naturally view the gospel of Christ. Among all the wonderful things which God has presented to the contemplation of his creatures, none are so well suited to excite our deepest interest and attention, as those which this gospel reveals. We see that God, who is wise in counsel, and wonderful in working, constantly employed for four thousand years in making preparations for Christ's appearance on earth. We see many holy and divinely inspired prophets raised up in different ages, to predict his incarnation. We see a person, born contrary to the common course of nature, employed as a harbinger to prepare his way. We see an angel sent from heaven to his intended virgin mother, to announce his approaching birth. We see a multitude of the heavenly host, sent to reveal the accomplishment of this event, and hear them shouting, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men. We see a miraculous star appearing in the East, to announce the same event to distant sages, and guide them to the feet of the new-born infant. Finally, we see the heavens

opened over his head, the Spirit of God descending like a dove to rest upon it, and at the same time hear the voice of the omnipotent, eternal Father of the universe, exclaiming, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. By comparing the predictions of his birth, with other parts of revelation, we find that the child thus born, the son thus given and ushered into our world, is in fact the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, God manifest in flesh, God over all, blessed forever, by whom and for whom all things were made, and in whom all things consist.

And what is the end and design of all these wonders? For what purpose is all this preparation made? Why do we thus see heaven opened, its inhabitants descending, and behold God dwelling in flesh, living, suffering, and dying as a man? To these questions, our text furnishes the only satisfactory answer. It teaches us, that all this was done for our salvation. The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

In meditating on this passage, we are naturally led to inquire,

I. What it is that is here spoken of as lost? It can scarcely be necessary to say, that it is the human race. Mankind are invariably represented by the inspired writers, as morally depraved, ruined and lost; and they are here spoken of as one, because they are all alike in the same lost condition, in consequence of their descent from the same parents. In Adam all die. As descendants from him, all are lost. In the first place, they are lost to God. He is our Creator, our Shepherd; and we, as the Psalmist expresses it, are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. But, to use the language of the prophet, we have all gone astray like lost sheep, and have turned every one to his own way. Like the prodigal son in our Saviour's affecting parable, we have forsaken our Father's house, and wandered from him into a far country. These, and other passages which represent us as being at a distance from God, are to be understood, however, not in a natural but moral sense; for in a natural sense, it is impossible for any creature to depart from God, since in him we live, move, and have our being, and cannot go from his Spirit, or fly from his presence. But while we are thus constantly surrounded by God, we are far from him in a moral sense. To use the expressive language of Scripture, He is not in all our thoughts; we live without

him in the world; we have lost his moral image, and he is become to us an absent and unknown God, so that it is necessary, as the apostle expresses it, that the sons of men should seek after the Lord, if peradventure they may feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. Should a man by any means be deprived of sight, he might be said to be lost to the sun, though this luminary would still shine around him, warm him with its beams, and produce the fruits which preserved his life. But he would have lost all views of its brightness, and of those objects which it discovers to others; its light would no longer guide him, nor enable him to discern the dangers which might be in his path. In a similar manner are men lost, with respect to God. Though his glory shines around them, and his power preserves their lives and gives them all the blessings they enjoy, yet they realize not his presence; they are blind to his perfections; they see not his glory in his works; they hear not his voice in his word; they are not guided by his light, they discern not the objects which he reveals. In a word, the Father of lights, the great sun of the universe, has no existence in their apprehensions. And when they look up to heaven, all is dark and the eternal throne appears empty. When they contemplate the visible creation, they see only a fair but lifeless body; for of God, the animating, guiding soul, who fills, upholds, and directs every part, they perceive nothing. Even when they look into the volume of his word, it is to them only a dead letter, and they find there nothing of God, though he lives and speaks in every line. Having thus lost the knowledge of the true God, they turn of course to some created idol, and transfer to it that affection, confidence, and dependence, which belongs to him. Forsaking the fountain of living waters, they have hewed out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water. Thus they are lost to God, as this world would be lost to the sun, should it fly off into the regions of eternal frost and darkness.

In the second place, being thus lost to God, mankind are of course lost to holiness. In forsaking him, they forsake the path of duty and become sinners. In forsaking him, they forsake also the author of all holiness in the hearts of creatures. Turn a mirror from the sun, and it ceases at once, to reflect his image. Place it in darkness, and it emits not a gleam of light. So

when a creature turns from God, he loses at once his holy image. Forsaking the fountain of good, he becomes wholly destitute of goodness. Should the most perfect created spirit in heaven wander from God, he would cease to be holy; he would become wholly depraved. He would be a devil. Agreeably, the Scriptures invariably represent mankind as by nature entirely destitute of holiness; as alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts; in a word, as dead in trespasses and sins, and of course as devoid of holiness as a dead man is of life. In consequence of being thus lost to God and holiness, mankind are consequently lost to happiness. God is the fountain of felicity, the only source of real happiness to intelligent creatures. In his presence only is fulness of joy: at his right hand alone, are pleasures forevermore. His favor is life, and his loving kindness is far better than life. He is the proper element of the soul, as the ocean is the element of its inhabitants, and as well might the inhabitants of the ocean, be happy in the burning sands of Arabia, as man can be happy in a state of absence from God. As the prodigal, who wandered from his father's house, soon experienced the miseries of famine, and found that the husks on which he fed, could not satisfy his hunger, so mankind, in their absence from God suffer a famine of happiness; they constantly hunger and thirst after satisfying pleasures, but find nothing of a satisfying nature. They often imagine indeed that they have found happiness, but painful experience soon undeceives them, and thus the miseries of perpetual disappointment are added to those of constant hunger and thirst. Their situation, to borrow the language of the prophet, is like that of a hungry man who dreameth, and behold he eateth, but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; or like that of a thirsty man, who dreameth, and behold he drinketh, but he awaketh and behold he is faint. Thus do men often dream that they have found some real good, something that will satisfy the soul, and as often awake to the pains of disappointment and unsatisfied desires. In addition to this negative unhappiness, the sinful feelings, passions, and pursuits of men bring upon them many positive miseries. Instead of living together in love, as a band of brothers, as they would do, had they not wandered from God and holiness, they are almost constantly engaged in wars, strifes,

and contentions, which not only disturb personal, domestic, and social happiness, but often spread desolation, wretchedness, and death over whole provinces and kingdoms at once. In short, sin has turned almost every man's hand against his brother, and even in the best regulated society, the petty jars and quarrels of families, the clashing of opposite interests, the contentions of differing political parties, and the slanderous reports, whispers and insinuations which are publicly or privately circulated, greatly disturb its peace, and leave little of happiness but the name.

These however are only the natural consequences of sin. If in addition to these, we consider its penal consequences, we shall be still more fully convinced that men are lost to happiness. By the penal consequences of sin, we mean those present and future miseries which the justice of a holy God has attached to its commission. Among these miseries may be mentioned those guilty fears and reproaches of conscience, which, in a greater or less degree, all sinners experience. If you will look into your own breasts, my friends, and consider how much you suffer from fears of death, apprehensions of God's anger, and self-reproach; if you reflect how often these things haunt you in secret, and how often they render you unhappy in society even, when an aching heart is concealed by a smiling countenance, you will feel convinced, that if other men are like you, they must feel much more unhappiness than they appear to feel, or than they are willing to confess. And, my friends, other sinful men are like you, and the mental sufferings which agitate your breasts, are a faithful counterpart to those which they experience; and never do these sufferings cease, till the sinner becomes holy, or his conscience is seared, and he is given up of God.

In the next place, among the penal consequences of sin, may be reckoned death, with all the diseases, pains, and sufferings which precede it, and the heart-rending anguish which it often occasions, when it deprives us of our children and friends. By sin, death entered into the world, and it passes upon all men, because all have sinned. Were there nothing else to render sinful men unhappy, the certainty of death would alone be sufficient to do it; for the more happy they were in other respects, the more would their happiness be disturbed by a dread of that awful hour which must put an end to it; and if their happiness

depended on the enjoyment of friends, the uncertainty of their life would furnish new cause for anxiety and alarm.

But these things, though sufficient to render men strangers to happiness, are not all the penal consequences of sin. On the contrary, they are but the beginning of sorrows, for the wages of sin is death, including not the death of the body only, but the death, the eternal death of the soul. By the broken law of God, all sinners are doomed to be cast into the lake of fire, which, says an inspired writer, is the second death; there to sink deeper and deeper through eternity in the abyss of wretchedness and despair, lost, forever lost, to God, to holiness, to happiness and hope.

Consider now the brief view which we have taken of the situation of sinful man. See him at first created in the image of his Maker, perfectly holy and upright, a stranger to pain, sorrow, sickness and death, enjoying perfect peace of conscience, and power with God, breathing nothing but love to him and his creatures, constantly employed with delight in his service, tasting the purest felicity in communion with him, and perpetually approaching nearer and nearer to that heaven which was his destined, eternal home. See the same creature, now deprived of the image and favor of God, wholly sinful and depraved, the slave of ungovernable passions and insatiable appetites and desires, a prey to guilty fear and remorse; exposed to sorrow, sickness and death in ten thousand forms; living for a while without God and without hope in the world, wholly neglecting the great end for which he was created, wandering farther and farther from the path of duty and happiness, with nothing before him but a fearful looking for of judgment, which will doom him to depart accursed into everlasting fire. Consider these things, and then say, is not this creature lost. Yet such is the natural situation of mankind; such would have been the inevitable, irreversible doom of all, had not the Son of God visited our world. To seek and to save this lost creature was the design on which he came; and this is the

II. General topic to be considered in this discourse. In treating it, I remark,

1. The Son of man came to seek the creatures thus lost.

In this passage, our Saviour probably alludes to his character of a shepherd, and to a parable uttered by him not long before,

in which he compares himself to a man going into the wilderness in search of a lost sheep. You need not be told, that this animal, when lost, never of itself returns to its shepherd, but rambles farther and farther from his fold, and even often flies from him as an enemy, when he comes to seek and conduct it home. Thus it is with lost man. Having once forsaken God, he has neither the disposition to return, nor the ability to discover the path which leads back to him. It is the natural tendency of sin, under whose influence he is, to carry him still farther from God, to take away all disposition to seek him, and to render him perfectly ignorant of the way in which he may be found. It leads the sinner to say to God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. It is therefore evident, that if these lost creatures are ever brought back to God, it will not be by their own exertions. God must seek them, or they will never seek him, and consequently will never find him. It is therefore necessary, that a guide should be sent from heaven to seek them and point out the way of return. Should this world, which now revolves round the sun, wander from it so far as to lose sight of its beams, it is evident that it could never again find its way back to the sun. It could hold up no light by which to discover this luminary; for the sun can be seen only by its own rays, and if the world should once lose sight of these rays, and be lost in the regions of eternal night, there would be nothing to guide it back, nothing to direct its course toward the sun. Then the only way to secure its return, would be for a ray of light proceeding from the sun to follow the lost planet through all its wanderings, and thus point out the way to the luminary from which itself emanated. Such is the situation of mankind with respect to God, the sun of the universe. They have wandered from him so far, that they have lost sight of his beams, all knowledge of his character and of the way to find him.

Now Christ considered as the Son of man, is a ray of light from this Sun, sent to find and guide us back to God. This, we are told is the brightness, the effulgence, the shining forth of his Father's glory, the true light which enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world. To find lost man, he undertook a long and toilsome journey; even a journey from heaven to earth, and at his return to heaven, he pointed out the way, and commanded, invited, and encouraged man to follow. Nor was it only to

the men who then lived on earth, that he thus pointed out the way to God, heaven, and happiness. No, he left infallible directions recorded in his word; he sent his blessed Spirit to supply his place on earth as a teacher and guide, and appointed under-shepherds to go forth under his directions, to seek and find lost sinners, and conduct them to his feet. By his Spirit, his ministers, and his word, he is still seeking them, and is often found of them who sought him not, and made manifest to them that asked not after him; and whenever you read the word of God, whenever you hear it preached, and above all, when you feel something within, silently urging you to comply with it, you then hear the voice of Christ, and have a fresh proof that he is still seeking those who are lost; and when by any of these things you are convinced of your sinfulness, guilt and danger, and of your need of such a Saviour and guide as Christ, it is a proof that he has found you, and is calling you to follow him in the path which leads to heaven.

2. The Son of man came to save that which was lost. He seeks in order to save, and if he did not save, it would be in vain for him to seek; for as we have already observed, men are not only ignorant of the way to God, but unwilling to follow it when pointed out to them. In addition to this, they are held in captivity by the prince of darkness, who will not suffer them to return; they are defiled by innumerable sins, which render them unfit for the presence of God and heaven; and by their apostacy, they have violated his holy law, whose demands they must satisfy, and whose curse, like a flaming sword turning every way, bars all access to the mercy seat. From all these things therefore, from all the natural and final consequences of sin, they must be saved, or they can never return to God; and to save them from these things, was the grand object for which Christ came into the world; for, it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners; and with this declaration his name, Jesus a Saviour, perfectly agrees.

In conformity with these, and other similar declarations of Scripture, Christ has accomplished a complete salvation for all who will humbly and thankfully accept it; and for his sake God has promised that all his chosen people shall be willing thus to accept it, in the day of his power. The way into heaven, the

holiest of all, is now laid open; every bar which once closed it, is removed; a flood of light shines around us, to discover it to our view. The blood of Christ has taken away those mountains of guilt which once interposed between us and God, and cleanses penitent believers from all sin; his Spirit sanctifies our polluted natures, and delivers us from the slavery of the world, the flesh, and the devil; prepares us for admission to heaven, and guides, supports, and comforts us in our journey thither, through this vale of tears. In a word, the empire of satan is subdued, the power of sin is destroyed, the sting of death is taken away; the bars of the grave are broken; life and immortality are brought to light; the flaming sword is quenched, God is reconciled, the eternal doors of heaven are thrown open, that which was lost is saved, the world is redeemed, and man is happy and free; happy that is, if he knows his own happiness and embraces the Saviour and the salvation thus freely offered; otherwise lost, more fatally, hopelessly lost, than ever. I close with a few reflections.

1. From our subject we infer that the word of God is of all books the most interesting, and would be so, even if we had no personal concern with its contents. Other books, even the most interesting, contain only accounts of human wars, terrestrial enterprises, and expeditions for the conquest or deliverance of nations, and the struggles of the oppressed for liberty, or of the daring exploits, and perilous achievements, and hairbreadth escapes of the falsely brave. But the Bible, independently of many other most interesting subjects, gives us an account of a war between good and evil, between God and the powers of darkness; of an expedition undertaken for the deliverance of a ruined, lost, enslaved world, an expedition planned in heaven; devised in the remote ages of eternity, and finally accomplished in the most successful manner by the eternal Son of God. In this war, we behold sin and satan, and death and hell, with all the power of earth, marshalled on one side; and on the other, the seed of the woman, the Son of man, going forth unarmed and alone to certain victory, and not less certain death; to victory which could be obtained only by his death; but which was completed by his triumphant resurrection and ascension to heaven. As the prize contended for in this warfare, we see millions of immortal souls, the least of which is of far more value than this world, with the worlds around it; souls whom the Son of

man is seeking to raise to heaven, while his foes wish only to sink them deep in hell. Such is the war which the word of God describes, such the combatants, such the spoils of victory. How much more interesting this, than all that human histories relate. How still more interesting when we recollect that we were the cause of this war, the prize for which such combatants contended. Why then do we peruse this volume with so little interest? One reason only can be assigned. We do not believe it.

2. How glorious, how amiable, how interesting does the Captain of our salvation appear in the light of our subject! You would contemplate with eager interest and admiration, a monarch who, reigning in perfect peace and prosperity over a country extensive as his wishes, should go forth and jeopardize his life in the high places of the field, merely with the benevolent purpose of delivering an enslaved people from oppression. You would follow him to the field of battle, tremble at his danger, sympathize with him if wounded, rejoice in his success, recount with pleasure his victories, and follow his triumphant return with praise. All this, and more than this, has taken place in our day with respect to a now living monarch in Europe. Thus has he been admired and praised by thousands. Why then do so few admire, praise, and love the Son of God. He was great and glorious, and happy in heaven to the utmost extent of his wishes, yet he cheerfully left it all to seek and to save a lost world, a world which was ruined, lost by ungratefully forsaking and rebelling against himself. Though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor. Though he was in the form of God, and equal with God, yet for our sakes he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and suffered himself to be despised, rejected, spit upon, buffeted, and finally crucified by his own creatures, when with infinite ease he could have avoided it all. In a word, to redeem us from the curse of the law we had broken, he consented to be made a curse for us. Why then, we repeat the question, why is he so little admired, praised and beloved by those whom he died to save? Why do so few comparatively commemorate his dying love? Why is he not extolled as much above all other deliverers, as he really is above them? The same answer must be again returned; it is because men do not believe. To believe that he has actually

done this, and not to love, admire, and extol him above all beings, is impossible. The apostle believed it, and we know to what efforts and sacrifices it impelled him. What then shall we say, my professing friends, we who profess to believe that he actually has done this; what shall we say, or rather what will be said of us, if we do not supremely love, admire, and praise the Saviour? May it not, must it not in that case, be said of us, that our faith is vain, since it does not produce love, and that, notwithstanding our profession, we are yet in our sins?

Lastly, did Christ come into our world to seek and to save lost sinners? Then it becomes us all most carefully to inquire, whether he has found and saved us. That he has found us, is evident, for the voice of his gospel, the voice of this great Shepherd, even now sounds in our ears. But has he saved us? Have we felt constrained to obey his call? Surely, if he has saved us, if we have been made new creatures; if we have passed from death unto life, we cannot but know something of it. Say then, have you found Christ? The pearl of great price, have you found it? And as you answer these questions, remember how much is implied in being lost, and how ample the provision for your deliverance, since the Son of man is come to seek and to save you.

SERMON LXI.

CHRIST, GOD'S BEST GIFT TO MAN.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.—2 Corinthians ix. 15.

Perhaps there is nothing which would more powerfully tend to convince us how little we resemble the primitive Christians, than a comparison of our views and feelings respecting the gospel of Christ, with those which they express in their writings. While we naturally discover in it nothing wonderful or excellent, listen to it with indifference, treat it with neglect, and perhaps consider it as little better than foolishness; they can scarcely mention or allude to it without feeling the strongest emotions, and breaking forth into the most rapturous expressions of gratitude, admiration, wonder and love. They style it the glorious gospel of the blessed God, speak of it as the most wonderful of all his wondrous works, and represent it as containing things unutterable and unsearchable, things into which even angels desire to look. An example of the glowing and energetic language which they were accustomed to employ in speaking of the subject, we have in our text; in which the apostle, reflecting on the goodness of God in giving his Son to die for us, exclaims in the fulness of his heart, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!

My friends, in obedience to long established custom, and to the voice of our civil rulers, we have this day assembled to give thanks to God. Perhaps some are ready to say, For what shall

we thank him? Our fathers, who established this custom, had reason to praise him, for they were favored with peace and prosperity. We too had formerly reason to praise him, for we once enjoyed the same blessings. But those days are past. Peace and prosperity are gone. We are involved in a war, of which we cannot foresee the termination. Our country is torn in pieces by political dissensions, and contending parties seem almost prepared to imbrue their hands in each other's blood. Our private sufferings and embarrassments are also great. Our commerce is destroyed, our business interrupted, our property, acquired in better days, taken from us; our families look to us for bread, which we shall soon be unable to give them; the prospect before us is dark and cheerless, and we fear that these days are but the beginning of sorrows. For what, then, should we thank God, or how attune our voices to joy and praise?

I answer, were our situation more deplorable than it really is, were we stripped of every earthly blessing, we should still have cause for joy and thankfulness; still have reason to praise God. We ought to rejoice that the Lord reigns, and we ought to praise him that we are not treated as we deserve, that we are not in the mansions of despair, that we are yet prisoners of hope. Above all, we ought to praise him for the unspeakable gift of his Son, and we shall do it if we possess the smallest portion of the apostle's temper. His situation was, in a temporal view, incomparably worse than that of any person in this assembly. Speaking of himself and his fellow disciples, he says, Even to the present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and buffeted, and reviled and persecuted. We are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things, unto this day. Yet in this distressed, oppressed condition, destitute of all the good things of life, and liable every day to lose life itself, he could still cry, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. Nay, more; while he lay in the gloomy dungeon of Philippi, his body torn with scourges, and his feet fast in the stocks, we find him still thanking God for the gospel of his Son, and causing his prison, even at midnight, to resound with his songs of joy and praise.

And can we then, with justice, pretend that we have no reason to be thankful? Ought not we, as well as the apostle, to bless God for the gospel of Christ? Is it not to us, as it was to

him, the gospel of salvation? Let us then banish from our minds every ungrateful feeling, every murmuring thought, and unitedly cry with the apostle, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. That you may be induced to do this, I shall attempt to show,

That Jesus Christ is the Gift of God to men: a Gift which may be justly called *unspeakable*: a Gift for which we should thank him with the most lively gratitude.

I. Jesus Christ is the Gift of God to men.

It can scarcely be necessary to remind you that a gift, or present, is something valuable freely offered to persons who have no claim to it, without receiving anything in return, and without any expectation that it will be restored. It must be something valuable; for a thing of no value cannot properly be considered as a gift. It must be offered freely, or voluntarily; for if we are obliged to offer it, it is merely the discharge of an obligation. It must be offered to persons who have no claim to it; for to those who can justly deserve it, it is not a gift, but only their due. If they claim it as a recompense for some injury which we have done them, it is restitution. If they claim it in return for services which they have performed, or favors which they have bestowed, it is a debt. It must be offered without expecting anything in return; for if we expect something equally valuable in return, it is an exchange; if we expect some lawful service to be performed, it is wages; if we expect anything unlawful, it is a bribe. Finally, it must be offered without any expectation that it will be restored to us; for otherwise it is a loan, and not a gift.

Now a moment's reflection will convince us that, in all these respects, Jesus Christ is, strictly speaking, a gift of God to man. Christ is something valuable; for, as we shall soon attempt to show, his worth is unspeakable. He is offered to us freely, or voluntarily; for God was under no kind of obligation to make us such an offer. He is offered to persons who have no claim to such a favor, for we can justly claim nothing at the hand of God but destruction. We cannot claim the offer of Christ as a recompense for injuries received from God, for he has never injured us, but has done us good and not evil all the days of our lives. Neither can we claim it in return for services performed, or favors bestowed: for we have never done any thing for God,

or bestowed the smallest favor upon him. On the contrary, we have done him all the injury in our power. Nor does God offer his Son with the expectation of receiving any thing in return, for we and all that we possess are already his; and if we were not, we could give him nothing; for even if we are righteous, what do we give him, or what receiveth he at our hands? When we have done all in our power, we are but unprofitable servants, and have done no more than it was our duty to do. Nor, finally, does God offer us his Son with any intention of resuming the gift; for, says the apostle, the gifts of God are without repentance, that is, irrevocable; he offers us his Son to be ours forever. Jesus Christ is, therefore, in the most strict and proper sense of the term, the gift, the free, unmerited gift of God to men.

I am not ignorant, however, that some deny this. I am aware that it is thought and urged by some, that God was under obligations to provide a Saviour for mankind, and that it would have been cruel and unjust for him to create beings who he knew would fall, had he not previously intended to give his Son for their redemption, or to open a way for their restoration, by some other means. These persons then pretend, that the law of God, which requires perfect obedience, on pain of death, is much too strict and severe, for such weak, fallen creatures, as we are; that it is unreasonable and unjust to require perfection of us, or to punish us for falling short of it; and that God, finding he had enacted a law too severe, was obliged to send his Son to bear its curse, deliver us from its authority, and introduce a milder law, which should allow us to sin a little, provided we would not sin much.

It is true, indeed, that few are to be found, who dare openly and directly avow such sentiments; but, they are the sentiments of every unrenewed heart; all men naturally consider the gospel as a kind of remedy for the too great severity of the law; and hence it is, in their view, little better than foolishness. And if this view of the gospel were correct, it would indeed be foolishness in the extreme; and God would no longer deserve our admiration, reverence, gratitude, or love. It would then appear that God was the offending, and we the injured party; that Christ died, not to make satisfaction for our transgression against God, but for God's too great severity to us; that he is offered to

us not as a free, unmerited gift, but as a recompense for the injuries we have received from our Maker, in his suffering us to fall, and threatening to punish us for our sins. Farewell, then, all the glory and grace of the gospel. Farewell, all ascriptions of praise to God, for his goodness, mercy and love. The wondrous plan of redeeming love, the unspeakable gift of God's eternal Son, dwindles down to the mere payment of a debt, a satisfaction for injury.

But is this indeed the glorious gospel of the blessed God? Is this that mystery, into which angels desire to look; is this the wonderful scheme which filled the breasts of the apostles with admiration, love and gratitude; and in which they professed to discover such heights and depths, such unutterable and unsearchable things? No, my friends, this is not the gospel; these are not the good tidings of great joy which angels delighted to bring from heaven. God's offer of his Son to guilty men is not the payment of a debt, or a recompense for injuries done them. No, it is a gift, a free, unmerited gift, an unspeakable gift, the worth of which we can neither describe nor conceive. God was under no obligation to provide a Saviour for our ruined race. He provided none for the fallen angels, nor was he any more obliged to provide one for us. With the most perfect justice, and without the smallest impeachment of his goodness, he might have left us all to perish; and peopled the earth and filled heaven, with a new and holy race of beings. Agreeably, the Scriptures every where represent the plan of salvation as entirely of grace, free, sovereign, wondrous grace, from its commencement to its termination. They tell us, that Jesus Christ is the gift of God; that he freely delivered him up for us all; that when we were his enemies Christ died for us; and that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish. Here is nothing said of the payment of a debt, or of recompense for injury. Nor do the blessed spirits of the just made perfect in heaven, view their salvation as flowing from anything but the most astonishing love and grace. Not unto us, they cry, not unto us, but to thy name give glory. Blessing and glory and honor and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever.

If, therefore, the apostles on earth or saints in heaven, or the Holy Spirit himself, knew anything of the plan of salvation,

Jesus Christ is in every respect the free gift of God to man. And why was such a gift necessary? Because we are children of ignorance, and needed a Divine teacher; because we are children of disobedience, and need a Divine sanctifier; because we are children of wrath, and need a Divine redeemer, to make an atonement for our sins. We have insisted the longer on this part of our subject, because until we are fully convinced that Christ is such a gift, we cannot prize the gospel as we ought, nor truly thank God for this or any other blessing.

II. I proceed to show, that this gift may be justly styled unspeakable.

With this view we observe,

1. That the love which led God to bestow such a gift upon us, must have been unspeakably great. This our Saviour, when speaking of it, plainly intimates. Though he spoke as never man spake, yet even he could not describe it except by its effects. God, says he, so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He does not say, God loved the world fervently, greatly, immeasurably; for none of these expressions were sufficient to show the extent of his love. Nor does he say, God so loved the world that he preserves, supports, and fills it with his blessings; for these proofs of his goodness, though great, are comparatively nothing. But he says, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; thus intimating that his love could not be described, and leaving us to judge of its greatness by its effects. And, judging by this rule, how great must his love have been! Say, ye who are parents, how must you love a person, before you could freely consent, for his sake, to give up an only son, to a cruel and ignominious death? But as high as the heavens are above the earth, as far as God excels his creatures, so far does his love for his Son surpass that which the most affectionate parent feels for his offspring. We are told that God is love, and we find that he can even love his enemies, so as to load them with favors; for he causes his sun to shine, and his showers to descend on the evil and unthankful. If then he can thus love his enemies, how infinitely must he love his innocent, holy, only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of his Father, and always does those things that please him! And how must he love the world, since, for its redemption, he gave up

this beloved Son to such agonies as Christ endured. But in vain do we attempt to give you any idea of this love. We sink under the weight of our subject. We cannot describe what is indescribable. We can only say, with the apostle, What manner of love is this? Well may it be called an unspeakable love!

2. The gift of Jesus Christ may be justly called unspeakable, because his worth and excellence are unspeakably great. He is the pearl of great, of inestimable price. He is not only precious, but preciousness itself. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and knowledge, and grace; so that as the apostle informs us, his riches are unsearchable. Nay more, in him dwells all fulness, even all the fulness of the Godhead. In giving us Christ, therefore, God has given us himself and all that he possesses; and hence, those who receive this gift, are said to be filled with the fulness of God. Had God given us a thousand angels to guard and attend us, or ten thousand worlds for our portion, it would have been comparatively nothing. It would have been nothing for him to give, for he could have created them with a single word. It would have been nothing for us to receive; for what are worlds, or angels, in comparison with the Creator of all worlds, and the Lord of angels. Nor is this all. In giving us Christ, God gave us all the other blessings which we enjoy. We are told, that every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. We are also taught, that all these gifts come in and through Christ; so that he may be justly called, not only a gift, but *the* gift of God, that is, the gift which includes all others. If the earth is full of the riches of God's goodness, if its inhabitants are preserved, fed, and clothed, if God gives them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with peace and gladness, if they derive any pleasure from children, friends and social intercourse, if they are permitted to hope for still greater blessings beyond the grave,—in a word, if any happiness is or has been enjoyed on earth, more than in hell, it was all given by God, when he gave us Christ to be the Saviour of the world. In this sense it is, that Christ is said to be the Saviour of all men, including those who do not believe. He pleads for them as the dresser of the vineyard did for the barren fig tree, that it might not be immediately cut down as a cumberer of the ground. Thus he saves them from instantly suffering the agonies of death

and the pains of hell. He saves them from many of the present effects and consequences of sin; he gives them to enjoy the day and means of grace, keeps back the curse which is every moment ready to blast them, and loads them with innumerable temporal and spiritual favors. Since then Christ is inestimably precious in himself, and since in him are included all the other gifts which God has ever bestowed on our race, he may be justly called an unspeakable gift.

3. Unspeakable as is the intrinsic value of Christ, he is, if possible, still more unspeakably valuable to us. You need not be told, that the value of a gift to the person who receives it, depends much on his circumstances. A sum of money may be a valuable present to any one; but to a man on the point of being dragged to prison for debt, it is much more so. Medicine, or food may be valuable in itself; but when given to a man ready to perish with sickness or hunger, its value is very greatly increased. So Christ is unspeakably precious in himself, and had God given him to the angels as their portion, it would have justly been called an unspeakable gift. But how unspeakably more valuable is such a gift to us, who were on the point of perishing forever. Would you know the worth of the gift to creatures in our situation? Go and contemplate the fallen angels in the mansions of despair. See them enveloped in the blackness of darkness, bound in eternal chains, reserved unto the judgment of the great day, and expecting nothing but an eternity of unutterable, and constantly increasing wretchedness, beyond it. Would the gift of an almighty Saviour, to redeem them from this situation, be to them unspeakably precious? If so, Christ is an unspeakably precious gift to us; for what they are suffering was our just doom, a doom which would have been inevitable, were it not for the gift of Christ. A wretched and hopeless life, a still more wretched and despairing death, and an inconceivably more wretched eternity, were all that we could expect; for, being children of disobedience, we were children of wrath; the fire prepared for the devil and his angels burnt to devour us; the broken law of God had pronounced the sentence of our everlasting condemnation, and nothing but the gift of such a Saviour as Christ, could have prevented our suffering it; for the word of truth declares, that he who believeth not the Son of God is condemned already; that he shall never see life,

and that the wrath of God abideth on him. But from this curse Christ has redeemed those who receive God's offered gift, by being made a curse for them, and they are delivered from wrath through him. Well then may the gift of such a Saviour to creatures in our situation, be called an *unspeakable gift.*

Lastly, the gift of Christ may be justly called an unspeakable gift, on account of the spiritual blessings which are enjoyed by those who receive him. We have already observed, that even those who reject him are favored for his sake, with many temporal mercies; but these are nothing compared with spiritual and eternal blessings which he imparts to those who thankfully accept the unspeakable gift of God. He gives them the pardon of all their sins, and accepts them as if they had never sinned. He brings them out of darkness and ignorance into his marvellous light, and imparts to them that knowledge of God and himself which is eternal life. He instamps the holy image of God on their souls, and makes them partakers of a divine nature. He delivers them from sin and guilt, from fear and anxiety, and thus prepares them to enjoy peace of conscience, and favor with God. He withholds from them no good thing, and causes all things, without exception, to work together for their good. He gives them exceeding great and precious promises, and provides for them strong consolation, to support them under the evils of life. He suffers them to fear no evil, in their last hours, and enables them to sing the song of victory over death and the grave. He receives and welcomes their departing spirits in the eternal world, raises their bodies incorruptible, glorious and immortal; acquits, acknowledges and rewards them, at the judgment day, and presents them, perfect in knowledge, in holiness and happiness, before the throne of his Father, with whom they shall live and reign forever and ever. In one word, he makes them heirs of God, and consequently heirs of all things; exerts to the utmost all the infinite perfections of the Godhead, to perfect, perpetuate and increase their happiness. And, my friends, what could he do more? What could any being do more? What can creatures desire more? Should they employ their minds, through eternity, they would be unable to wish for, or conceive of any thing which the gift of Christ does not include. Who then can deny that it may be justly called an unspeakable gift; since it raises those who accept it from the lowest depth of

wretchedness to which a creature can sink, to the highest pitch of glory and felicity which creatures can reach?

III. This is a gift for which we ought to thank God with the most lively gratitude.

But, my friends, is it necessary to prove this? Is it not already evident? The principal circumstances which render a gift deserving of thankfulness, are the motives which occasion it, its intrinsic value, its being adapted to our circumstances, and the benefits which we derive from it. But we have already shown that the love which induced God to offer us the gift of Christ, his own intrinsic value, our perishing need of such a Saviour, and the benefits which he bestows on those who accept him, are alike unspeakably great. It therefore necessarily follows, that our gratitude to God for this gift should be unspeakable. The gratitude of just men made perfect is so. Never have they been able, never will they be able, to express all the gratitude which they feel to God, for the gift of his Son. It is an inexhaustible fountain which flows, and ever will flow, in ceaseless praises and thanksgivings, throughout eternity. If then we possess any thing of the temper of heaven, if we hope ever to join in the employments of heaven, if we, in the smallest degree, resemble the apostle, we shall unitedly join with him in exclaiming, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! We shall partake of the food which God this day provides for our refreshment, with feelings in some measure similar to those with which the spirits of the just feast on the bread and water of life, at the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven, and our whole future lives will be one continued day of thanksgiving to God.

If any still feel unconvinced, that we ought to thank God for the gift of his Son, we would ask them whether God can do anything for which his creatures ought to thank him. Can he bestow upon them any favor which shall entitle him to their gratitude? If so, he has done it already, in giving us his Son; for he can do nothing greater for any creature, he can give us nothing more precious than this. In giving us Christ, he has given us himself, and all that he possesses, so that he may now justly say to us, Unthankful, obstinate creatures! what shall I do to excite your gratitude; how shall I purchase that place in your affections, which ought to be mine, without purchase? I had but one Son; him I have freely given for your redemption;

and now I have nothing more to offer. To purchase your gratitude and love, I have made myself poor; I have given you all I possessed, and if this is not sufficient, I can only come to you as a suppliant, and beseech you, for my sake, for my Son's sake, for your own sakes, to be reconciled to your heavenly Father, and accept with thankfulness my offered grace. Such is, in effect, the language of your gracious, condescending God; yet, astonishing to tell, there are hearts so hard as to be unaffected with this language, so stubbornly ungrateful as to refuse to thank him for the unspeakable gift.

My friends, are not some of your hearts of this description? Are there not some among you who have, through life, requited God evil for good? Are there not some present, who never sincerely thanked God for the gift of his Son, and who would feel more joy and gratitude for the gift of a few thousands of pounds, than they have ever felt while hearing the good news of a Saviour? If there be any present of this description, let me entreat them to consider what they have done, what they are now doing. How hateful, how inexcusable, must such ingratitude appear in the sight of God! How widely do you differ from him who uttered the words of our text, and from all holy beings! How impossible is it for you, with such a temper, to join in the praises of heaven, or derive any advantage from the gift of Christ. The gift is indeed offered to all, but it will benefit none but those who thankfully receive it. Be persuaded then, this day, to receive it with thankfulness, and let the goodness of God lead you to repentance. While you feast on the bounties of Providence, remember that they were purchased by the blood of Christ. Should you do this, this will indeed be a thanksgiving day, the beginning of an eternal thanksgiving in heaven.

SERMON LXII.

MANS TREATMENT OF CHRIST.

Having yet therefore one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also, last, unto them, saying, They will reverence my Son —MARK XII. 6.

THESE words compose part of the following parable, addressed by our Saviour to the Jews: A certain man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a wine-fat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent unto the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from them of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore, one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also unto them, saying, They will reverence my Son. But the husbandmen said among themselves, this is the heir; let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

The meaning of this parable, as referring to God's dealings with the Jews, and to their abominable treatment of his messengers, and of his Son, is too obvious to require explanation. Nor with its meaning, as referring to them, have we any personal concern. We are only concerned to inquire, how far it is applicable to ourselves; and a little reflection will convince us, that many of the truths which it illustrates, may be applied to us

with no less propriety than to the Jews. We, and all other Christian nations, are now what they once were. To us, as well as to them, the prophets, and the Son of God have been sent; for we have their words in the Bible, by which, they being dead, yet speak. He that receives those words, receives Christ, but he that rejects them, rejects Christ. But waiving a consideration of those and other truths, brought to view by this parable, I propose, at present, to confine myself exclusively to that part of it which has been read as our text. God is here represented as saying, with reference to those to whom Christ was sent, They will reverence my Son. We are not to infer from this expression, that God was ignorant of the manner in which his Son would be treated; or that he really expected men would receive him with reverence; for his sufferings and death were explicitly predicted long before his appearance in the world. But God here speaks after the manner of men. He is merely stating what reception it might have reasonably been expected would be given to his Son, by one who did not know or who did not consider the wickedness of the human heart. Such a person, on seeing Christ sent down from heaven to assist men, would have exclaimed, Surely they will receive him with reverence and affection. Though they have persecuted and slain God's servants, yet surely they will reverence his Son.

The principal truth taught by our text then, is evidently this; it was reasonable to expect that, when our Saviour visited this world, he would be received by mankind with reverential affection. To show that it was so, is my present design.

I. It was reasonable to expect this, on account of the dignity of Christ's person. We learn from the predictions which foretold his coming, that in person he was divine, and in dignity infinite. Behold, says the prophet, referring to this event, Jehovah God shall come with a strong hand; his reward is with him, and his work before him. And again, speaking in the language of prophecy, which describes future events as having already taken place, Isaiah says, Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Out of thee, Bethlehem Ephratah, shall he come, whose goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting. To the same purpose the angel who predicted his birth informed

Joseph that he should be called Immanuel, God with us; God dwelling with men. Hence, when John came as his harbinger to announce his approach, he cried, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Agreeably to these predictions, we are informed that the eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, was made flesh and dwelt among us; that he is the true God and eternal life; God over all, blessed forever. Now who that believed these predictions; who that saw them fulfilled in the coming of Christ, would not have expected that he should be received with reverence and affection? Was it not highly reasonable to expect that when God came down to visit and dwell with men, he would be received by them in this manner? Were you informed that God was again about to visit us in a similar manner, in a visible form, would not you expect him to meet with such a reception? You will recollect what preparations were made to receive the chief magistrate of these States, on his late tour? Was it not reasonable to expect that at least equal preparations would have been made for the reception of the God and ruler of the universe? The reasonableness of such an expectation will appear still more evident, if we consider,

II. The relation which subsisted between Christ and mankind previous to his coming. He was their Creator, the Creator of the world; for by him, we are told, were all things created, and without him was not any thing made that is made. He was in the world, and the world was made by him. He was also the preserver of men; for he supports all things by the word of his power, and by him all things subsist. As the Creator and Preserver, he was the rightful possessor of all things; for, we are told, that all things were made not only by him, but for him; that he is appointed heir of all things, and that all things are his. He had also for thousands of years, been constantly showering down temporal blessings upon mankind, giving them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. In coming into the world then, Immanuel came, as the apostle expresses it, to his own. He came to his own world, to his own creatures, the work of his own hands, to his own dependants, the deeply indebted pensioners of his bounty. And was it not reasonable to expect, that men should receive such a being with reverence, gratitude and affection?

Every other part of creation knew and acknowledged its Creator. Plants and animals, the winds and waves, diseases and death, and even the spirits of disobedience owned his authority, and obeyed his commands. Surely, then, it might have been expected that man, an intelligent creature, the most deeply indebted of his creatures, would receive his Creator and Benefactor with at least equal tokens of reverence and affection. It might have been expected that every habitation should have been thrown open to him; that every heart would have welcomed him, that every tongue would be loud in praises and congratulations, and that all the treasures of earth would be laid at his feet, and all its honors poured upon his head.

III. The design on which Christ came into our world, and the form in which he appeared, rendered it still more reasonable to expect that he would meet with such a reception. Had he visited us merely for his own pleasure, he ought, as our Creator and benefactor, to receive the most honorable, grateful, and affectionate welcome, which it was in the power of men to give. But he did not come to please or gratify himself. No, he came into the world to save sinners, to seek and to save those who were lost; to redeem those who had rebelled against him, grieved and insulted him, from the terrible punishment which their sins deserved. In order to this, he came as a teacher to restore to men the lost knowledge of God, to bring life and immortality to light, to be the sun of the soul, the light of the world. He came to be not only its light, but its life; to give it life by laying down his own; and that he might for this purpose lay down his life, he appeared in our nature in the likeness of sinful flesh, and the form of a servant. That this was the design of his coming, mankind were previously informed by the predictions which foretold it. They were told that he would come to be wounded for others' transgressions, to be bruised for their iniquities, to bear the chastisement of their peace, and to heal them by his stripes. Who, then, when they saw the Lord of life and glory appear on earth for such a purpose, and in such a form, would not have thought it reasonable to expect that all who had heard these predictions, all who knew the design of his coming, would receive him with every possible demonstration of grateful affection. Who that has seen the almost idolatrous admiration and reverence with which men have often regar-

ded human teachers, and mere temporal deliverers, would not have expected to see this celestial Teacher, this deliverer from interminable evils welcomed with the loudest acclamations; to see men striving to make him some compensation for the glories of which he had stripped himself for their sakes, sympathizing with him in all the sufferings which their sins had brought upon him, and weeping at his feet over the sins which occasioned them?

It has ever been allowed that there is something venerable, as well as affecting, in the sorrows of suffering greatness; and that a wise and good monarch reduced to poverty and distress is a spectacle which no man, not wholly devoid of feeling could contemplate without feeling emotions of respectful sympathy. How venerable, how grand, how dignified then, were the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of God! sorrows and sufferings brought upon him, not by his own misconduct or imprudence, but by his own boundless benevolence. Who, then, would not have expected, that these sorrows should have been held sacred? Who does not perceive that God on the throne of the universe has, if I may so speak, less claims upon the reverence, gratitude and affection of his creatures, than God manifest in flesh in the form of a servant? Who does not see that God, appearing as Immanuel, God with us, has more numerous and more powerful claims upon mankind than God in any other form? If, then, Jehovah is worshipped and adored with rapturous affection, by angels in heaven, much more might it be expected that he should be loved and praised by men, when for their sakes he appeared as a man of sorrows on earth.

IV. The bright, unsullied excellence of Christ's moral character, and the various estimable qualities which were exemplified in his conduct, furnish another consideration which rendered it reasonable to expect that he would be received with the highest affection and esteem. That goodness ought to excite affection, will not be denied. That magnanimity, courage, and fortitude ought to be regarded with veneration and esteem, is equally obvious. Now, in the character of the man Christ Jesus, goodness of heart and greatness of mind, were combined. He possessed in the highest possible degree every estimable, moral and intellectual quality. He was the only perfect man which the world has seen since the fall. He exhibited human

nature in the highest degree of perfection to which it can be raised. In him goodness and greatness were not only personified, but, if I may so express it, concentrated and condensed. He was light and love clothed with a body. Qualities which are never seen united in men, and which seem almost incompatible with each other, were in him sweetly and harmoniously blended. Seldom indeed do we see the qualities of the lion and the lamb, of the serpent and the dove uniting together in the same person. Those who are distinguished for benevolence, gentleness, condescension, meekness, compassion, sympathy and sweetness of temper, are usually deficient in magnanimity, courage and fortitude. And on the contrary, those who are remarkable for possessing the qualities last mentioned, are usually destitute of the mild and amiable virtues. But Christ possessed them all. He displayed in the highest degree magnanimity, firmness, courage and fortitude; and those heroic virtues were shaded and softened by all that is mild and amiable and attractive. While he far excelled all the heroes, conquerors, and great ones of the earth in those qualities of which they boast, he rivalled the smiling infant in tenderness and sweetness of disposition. In a word, he was the lion of the tribe of Judah, and he was the lamb of God. Here then was such a character as men had never seen before; a character with which even the holy, Omniscient Judge of excellence was pleased and delighted. Surely then, it might have been reasonably expected that, when such a character was presented to the wondering eye of mankind, they would receive him with reverence and affection; that all the praises which they had for ages lavished on far inferior excellence, would at once have been given to him.

V. The interesting information which our Saviour communicated, and the excellence of the doctrines which he taught, and of the precepts which he inculcated, rendered it still more reasonable to expect that he would meet with such a reception. I need not tell you what respect, what honors have, in all ages and parts of the world, been given to extensive knowledge, to eminently learned men. I need not tell you what crowds of attentive, admiring disciples many philosophers have drawn after them, and with what despotic sway they have ruled the minds of men, even after they were laid in their graves. Ly-

curgus, Solon, Confucius, Zoroaster, Mahomet, and many others, either have been or now are admired, followed, and almost worshipped by whole nations. Even the very Jews, who rejected the true Messiah, sacrificed their lives by thousands to every impostor who assumed his name, however absurd and groundless might be his pretensions. In addition to these facts we may remark, that mankind usually feel and display a strong degree of curiosity and interest with respect to any message or appearance that relates to the invisible world. Almost every idle tale of spectres and apparitions has power to engage the attention, for a time, even of those who disbelieve it; and should a person with whom we had been acquainted, and whom we knew to have been dead and buried, revisit our world, you can in some measure conceive with what interest he would be regarded, and how eagerly men would press to learn from him the secrets of the grave.

Now who, that was acquainted with facts, and with the purport of Christ's instructions, would not think it reasonable to expect that he should be received with every mark of eager and respectful attention. He came not merely from the grave, but from heaven, from the other world to this; came to make that world and its inhabitants known to men; came to tell them what shall be hereafter, to lift the veil which conceals eternity, to inform us what befalls the soul after its separation from the body, to describe the proceedings of the judgment day, and the future state of mortals, to reveal things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. In a word, he came filled with all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and willing and able to impart them to others. In comparison with him, all other teachers and legislators were but as lamps to the sun. In comparison with his instructions, all the discoveries of human wisdom were mere dreams and fables. Even his prejudiced townsmen could not but marvel at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and his very enemies were constrained to cry, Never man spake like this man. Nor was this all. His instructions were delivered not as mere opinions, not as the deductions of reason, but as infallible truths, as a revelation from God, a revelation attested by numberless miracles, and thus sealed with the broad seal of heaven. Who then, would not have expected to see the world flocking around

him, and all its philosophers with their disciples sitting, like Mary, at his feet, to hear his words.

But, perhaps, some will think it a sufficient reply to all this to say, The world did not know Christ, did not know what he was; otherwise he would have been received in a proper manner. The apostle himself informs us, that none of the princes of this world knew Christ. I readily acknowledge that they did not know him. But why did they not? They certainly might have known him; for the works that he did in his Father's name, bore witness of him; and they received many impostors as the Christ, without the thousandth part of the evidence which he exhibited. But not to insist on this, permit me to remark, that however strongly the excuse may be urged in favor of the Jews, it cannot be urged at all in extenuation of our conduct. If the Jews did not know Jesus to be the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, we do. Every thing in the manner of his appearance which was dark to them, is explained to us. What was prophecy then is history now. We are clearly taught who Christ was, and for what he came and lived and died; and we are also taught, that he who taught the Jews on earth, now speaks to us from heaven; that he who receives his word receives him, and he who rejects it, rejects him.

Even then if it were not reasonable to expect that the Jews should have received him with grateful reverence and affection, it may still be reasonably expected that we should receive him in this manner; that we should believe all his doctrines, obey all his precepts, trust in all his promises, and consecrate all we have and are to his service. He is still in the world, as really as he ever was. He still comes to us by his Spirit, still stands knocking for admission at the door of our hearts, giving us an opportunity to admit him. Who then, that forgets for a moment the depravity of the human heart, would not expect to see all admit him? Who would not expect to find the Creator, Preserver and Saviour of the world regarded as all in all in his own world? Who would not expect to find him the chief subject of conversation in every house, to find him regarded as the best and dearest friend of every family, to hear his name lisped by children as the first word which they were taught to utter; to see all knees bowing to him, to hear every tongue confessing him, and all ages and classes uniting to cry, Hosanna to the

Son of David! blessed is he who came in the name of the Lord, to seek and save our lost and ruined race? In short, who that should hear Christian nations professing to believe that Christ died for all, would not expect to hear them add, with the apostle, this love constrains us to live, not to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again? My friends, I need not tell you how wretchedly one who should expect this would be disappointed. I have told how it was reasonable to expect Christ would be treated. I need not tell you how he actually is treated. I need not tell you how long a person might live in some of your houses, without hearing the name of Jesus mentioned, except profanely, without hearing one expression, or seeing one token of grateful affection for him.

Surely, my friends, these things ought not so to be. Surely, a Saviour, a self-devoted, crucified Saviour, a divine Saviour ought not to be treated in this manner. Surely, he has a right to expect some better return from our race than he has yet received. And what has he done, that he should be treated in this manner. Many good works has he done for us; for these shall we maltreat him? Well might we blush to belong to a race of beings who treat him thus, had we not each of us still more reason to blush for our own share in the neglect with which he has been treated. Let me entreat you to lay these things seriously to heart, to inquire whether Christ has among his treasures any token of grateful affection from you; to remember that if it were reasonable to expect that Christ should be received in the manner we have described, thus to neglect him is the most unreasonable and the most criminal sin of which we can be guilty. It was the sin which destroyed the Jews. They rejected and slew the prophets, and God punished them with a seventy years' captivity. They rejected and crucified his Son, and after almost eighteen hundred years, still groan under the punishment of that sin. My friends, we begin where they left off. Their last sin is our first. Their last step in the career of depravity, the step which plunged them into perdition, is the first step taken by those of you who are still rejecting the Saviour. What, then, will your end be? If your infancy in sin equals their manhood, and even their old age, what desperate lengths may you be expected to go, in sinning against the Saviour, should your lives be spared? O, then,

turn while there is hope; turn before it is too late; give to Christ the reception which he has a right to expect; and let your first step in sin be your last.

To you, my professing friends, the subject is, if possible, still more interesting. If so much may be reasonably expected of others, what may not be expected of you? of you, who profess to know the Saviour, to hope that he loves, that he has pardoned and saved you? Are you loving and honoring and serving him in as great a degree as he desires? Is your love for him great in proportion to the greatness and number of the sins which you hope he has forgiven? Do you wonder that you are bound to love and praise him, not only for yourselves, but for your unbelieving neighbors, to endeavor to pay their debt of gratitude as well as your own? Were he now corporeally present on earth, and should all the unbelieving part of the town unite in neglecting or insulting him, would you not feel bound to exert yourselves to the utmost to atone for the neglect, to supply the deficiencies? The same reasons exist why you should do it now. O, then, be up and doing. Endeavor to ascertain what the Creator of the world deserves when he visits it in the form of sinful man, to die for its salvation; to calculate what you owe him for the sins he has pardoned, to estimate what the Saviour is worth to you; and say if you can serve him with too great zeal, or persevere too long in his service.

SERMON LXIII.

AN ASSEMBLY CONVOKED AGAINST SINNERS.

And I set a great assembly against them. — Nehemiah v. 7.

When Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, with a commission from the Persian monarch, appointing him governor of Judea, after the return of the Jews from captivity, he found that many evils and abuses had crept in among them, which it required all his wisdom and firmness to rectify. But as he was a man whom nothing could daunt or discourage, he exerted himself vigorously to correct these evils, and succeeded. An account of the means which he employed on one occasion, for this purpose, we have in the chapter before us. After stating that he summoned the guilty persons before him, and reproved them for the evils to which they had been accessory, he adds, And I set a great assembly against them. He seems to have adopted this measure, partly, because the persons implicated were numerous and powerful, and it was necessary to show them that still greater numbers disapproved of their conduct; and partly, with a view to produce in them such a salutary shame and remorse, as might lead them to a voluntary renunciation of their criminal practices. The measure was successful. Although the criminals, relying on their numbers, wealth, and power, might have braved the displeasure of Nehemiah alone, they could not support the disapprobation of the numerous assembly he set

against them; and therefore consented to renounce the gainful, but illegal practices, of which they had been guilty, and to make restitution to those whom they had injured.

My hearers, I wish to adopt, with respect to the irreligious part of this assembly, a measure similar to that which was employed by the governor of Judea. I wish to show impenitent sinners, of every description, how great an assembly may be set against them; how numerous are the beings, who regard their conduct with most decided disapprobation. It is the more necessary to do this, because there is nothing on which sinners so much rely, nothing which so much encourages and strengthens them in their neglect of religion, as the greatness of their numbers. In this place, and indeed in every part of this revolted world, they have a great majority on their side. They are decidedly superior to the servants of God, not only in number, but in wealth, and power, and influence; so that were the great question, what is truth? to be decided by numbers, they could easily determine it in their own favor. Now among a race of beings so much influenced by custom, fashion, and example, as men are, the evils occasioned by this fact are prodigious. The very circumstance, that so large a majority of mankind are on the side of irreligion, tends powerfully to preserve a majority on that side; for a large proportion of the youth, in each successive generation, will enlist under the banner of the strongest party. The same circumstance operates most powerfully to weaken the force, and prevent the success of those means and arguments, which God employs for the conversion of sinners. When the man who neglects religion, looks around him, and sees wealth, rank, power and influence, all ranged on his side, he secretly says, I must be right, I must be safe; the evils with which I am threatened cannot be real; no danger can attend the path which so many pursue; the arguments which are employed to effect a change in my sentiments and conduct cannot be founded in truth, and are therefore unworthy my attention. If I fare as well as the great mass of my fellow creatures, I shall fare well enough. This being the case, it is important to show sinners, that a great assembly may be set against them; an assembly, whose approbation is far more valuable, and whose example is far more worthy of imitation, than that of all the multitudes whom they are following. In attempting to do this, however,

I shall address those, only, who assent to the truth of the Scriptures, and who acknowledge arguments drawn from them to be valid. If we cannot show sinners of this description, a greater assembly collected against them, than they can collect on their side, we consent, that from this time, they shall follow the world wherever it leads them. Among those, my irreligious hearers, who are against you, we may mention,

1. The good men now in the world. By good men, I do not mean professors of religion; for many professors are on your side, and are perhaps more guilty than any of you. But by good men, I mean men really good, men whom God will acknowledge to be good. Now there is not one, no, not one such man among all the multitudes on whose numbers you rely. Look through the whole host of your associates, and you cannot find one good man. Even in Sodom, there was one. But in all the ranks of those who neglect religion, there is not one. All, all good men are against you. God has not a servant, Jesus Christ has not a friend on earth, who is not against you. Their example is against you, their testimony is against you. And although their number, in any particular place, may be small, yet were they collected from all parts of the world, they would probably form the most numerous assembly the world ever saw. And if thus collected, they would all, with one voice, testify against you and condemn your conduct. Yes, if all the goodness which the eye of God now sees scattered in different parts of the earth, were here present, it would set itself in direct opposition to the course you are pursuing. My irreligious hearers, to have such an assembly as this against you, is not a small thing. To belong to a company, in which not a single good man can be found, is far from being desirable, however large that company may be.

But perhaps some will reply, we differ in our ideas of goodness, and of good men. There are many on our side, whom you will not acknowledge to be good men, but whom we consider as such, and in whom we may justly boast. I answer, it is of very little consequence whom I consider as good; for it is a small thing to be judged of men's judgment. But you will recollect, that I call those only good men whom the Bible, whom God pronounces to be good. And you surely will not pretend that any others have a claim to the title. Nor will you pretend that God regards as good any man who neglects religion.

I am willing, however, in this case, not to appeal to the Bible. I will meet you on broader ground, on ground where men of all religious denominations and opinions will consent to meet. I will take the due performance of one duty, the duty of prayer, as the characteristic of a good man. I mention this duty, because not only all denominations of Christians, but Jews, Mahometans, Heathens, and even many infidels, acknowledge prayer to be a duty. And they all acknowledge that this duty ought to be performed sincerely; and that no man, who does not thus perform it, is a good man. Allow me then to set all the persons in the world, who do pray sincerely, against those who never pray at all, or pray only in an insincere, formal manner. Those of you who neglect prayer, will still have the majority on your side, but of whom is that majority composed? Among them all, there is not one to pray, either for himself, or for his companions; not one to implore the blessing of Heaven on your numerous host. From all that host, not one cry ascends to Heaven for mercy. All the prayer which ascends from the world, ascends from that great assembly which is set against you. My hearers, you must choose which side you please; but permit me to say, I would rather stand with only ten praying persons, against a prayerless world, than with a prayerless world, against ten men of prayer. Indeed, who, that believes the Bible, would not rather be with Noah, against an ungodly world, than with an ungodly world, against Noah? But all the good men who are now on earth, form only a very small part of the assembly which may be collected against those of you who neglect religion.

I proceed to set against you,

2. All the good men who have ever lived in the world, and whose spirits, the spirits of just men made perfect, are now in heaven. These, it is obvious to remark, compose an assembly, far exceeding in number, all the good men who are now alive. In this assembly, stands righteous Abel, the first martyr; Enoch, who was translated, that he should not see death; Noah, who walked with God, when a world rose up in arms against him; Abraham, the friend of God and the father of the faithful; Israel, who as a prince, had power with God and with men, and prevailed; Moses, who chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Elijah, who ascended alive into heaven, together with a long list of other venerable names, of whom the world was not worthy. In this assembly we also see John the Baptist, than whom a greater was never born of woman; the twelve apostles, and other immediate disciples of our Lord; the almost countless host of the martyrs, who in the first three centuries sealed the truth with their blood; the reformers, who burst the iron bands of papal superstition; the pious fathers of New England, who forsook their country, and braved the perils of the ocean and the hardships of a savage wilderness, that they might have the liberty of serving God according to the dictates of their own consciences.

All these, and myriads more, composing an assembly which no man can number, I set against you. All the collected goodness, which for more than five thousand years has adorned the world, and saved it from destruction, I array against you. I invoke the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs; I invoke all the friends of God, and servants of Jesus Christ, now in heaven, to descend with their robes of light, their harps and crowns of gold, and repeat the testimony, which, while on earth, they bore against the sin of a God-denying world. I invoke the fathers of New England to appear, and rebuke the folly and impiety of their degenerate sons, who neglect the God of their fathers, and practically say of the Redeemer, in whom they trusted, We will not have this man to reign over us.

And now, sinner, look at the heavenly host of God's elect, purified from all earthly stains, made perfect in knowledge, in wisdom and holiness, and shining resplendent with the glories of the upper world, while with countenances full of celestial compassion, yet severe in grave rebuke, they array themselves against you, and reprove the madness of which you are guilty. Not one of them ascended to heaven from your ranks; not one of them, should he revisit the earth, would enter your ranks. No, while they resided here as expectants of eternity, they exchanged the broad crowded road, in which you are walking, for the narrow way which has led them to heaven; and by their example, and their writings, they, though dead, still speak, and bear testimony against all who follow your path. It appears therefore, that not only all the goodness, which now exists in

the world, but all that ever has existed in it since its creation, is arrayed in direct opposition to you. In the same opposing assembly are found,

3. All the writers of the Old and New Testaments. We have indeed already mentioned them as good men, but we now speak of them as inspired men, and the fact of their inspiration is of such consequence as to entitle them to a separate notice. Indeed the authority of a single inspired man is sufficient to countervail the authority of the whole human race, for the authority of an inspired writer is, in effect, the authority of God himself. Look then sinner, at this venerable band, which, though small in number, is more than equivalent to the more numerous host. See the eternal Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth, descending upon them, and teaching them what to say. Being taught by him they speak, and with one voice testify against you. With one voice they cry, Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him! With one voice they denounce indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. To have this little band against you, is more dreadful than to face the indignation of a frowning world; for their words are the words of one, who has said, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

4. Another part of the great assembly, which we array against you, is composed of the holy angels. Whether we consider the number, the character, or the intellectual rank of these pure, exalted intelligences, it will appear no small thing to have them arrayed against us. Their number is great. One inspired writer speaks of them, as an innumerable company. Another says, that they are ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. It is not improbable that they equal, or even exceed in number the human race. Their intellectual abilities and acquirements, are of the highest order. In comparison with the least of them, the wisest human philosopher is a child. Nor are they less distinguished by moral excellence; for their holiness is perfect, spotless.

And they are all, sinner, arrayed against you. They have their supreme delight in executing the will of that God, whom you neglect and disobey. They veil their faces before him, whom you treat with irreverence. They ascribe wisdom and

strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing, to that Redeemer, whom you refuse to embrace, of whose invitations you make light. Yes, all the angels of God worship him, who was crucified on earth, and whom sinners do, in effect crucify afresh by their sins. How groundless, then, is the often repeated boast of worldly men, that talents, wisdom and knowledge are, almost exclusively, on their side. Against all their boasted philosophers, their learned infidels, their intellectual Goliaths, who defy the armies of the living God, we array the heavenly hosts, the cherubim, and the seraphim, the thrones and dominions, the principalities and the powers, of the upper world. We cannot think it a mark either of weakness or of ignorance, to imitate their example,—we cannot think it disgraceful to echo their ascriptions of praise to God and the Lamb, nor can we think it either wise or honorable, to neglect that gospel, whose mysteries such minds contemplate with eager and delighted attention.

But why do we speak of good men, of the spirits of the just made perfect, or even of the holy angels, as arrayed in opposition to the course which sinners are pursuing? Why do we waste time in assembling *creatures* to support our cause? However holy or highly exalted they may be, they can give it no additional lustre; it needs them not, for,

5. The Lord Jesus Christ, my irreligious hearers, is arrayed against you, and what can creatures add to the weight of his opposition? He is the leader of that numerous host, the Captain of salvation, the Lord of angels and men, the appointed Judge, who will pronounce an immutable sentence on both. He holds the keys of death, and of hell; he possesses all power in heaven and on earth, and were all creatures on our side, it could avail us nothing while he is against us. And, my impenitent hearers, he is against you; he sets his face against the course which you are pursuing; every doctrine which he promulgated, every precept which he enjoined, every threatening which he uttered, every action of his life, is against you. Even his death bears testimony to the sinfulness of your characters, to the guilt and danger of your situation; for how sinful, guilty, and dangerous must be the state of those, whose sin rendered his death necessary! Every part of that religion which he revealed, cries, How can they escape who neglect so great salvation? And you, my impenitent hearers, are neglecting it. The neglectors

of this salvation, are the very persons whom we address, and against whom we are collecting this great assembly. And all of this description, the Lord Jesus Christ meets full in their path, and says, Pursue this path no farther, on peril of your souls. He meets all the impenitent, and says, Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. He meets the unbelieving, and says, He that believeth not, shall be damned. He meets all the unholy, and says, Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. He meets all the unregenerate, and exclaims, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye be born again, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. And if any of these characters shall continue till death in their present course, they will find him against them at the judgment day, prepared and disposed to execute upon them the sentence pronounced in his word.

Finally, my irreligious hearers, God the Father is against you. Yes, sinner, the infinite God, the ever-living, almighty, and every where present God, the high, and holy, and just, and unchangeable God, is against you. He who sitteth on the circle of the earth, and counts all its inhabitants as nothing and vanity; he who holds all creatures and all worlds as in the hollow of his hand; He in whom you live, and move, and have your being, even he has revealed himself in direct opposition to the course you are pursuing. Coming forth from the unapproachable light in which he dwells, arrayed in all the majesty, and terrors, and glory of self-existent divinity, he discloses himself to view, seated on the throne of the universe, with his immutable law issuing from his lips, and going forth to demand obedience from his creatures on pain of death. Casting a glance of severe and awful displeasure on the course which you are pursuing, with his own right hand he waves you back, and with his own authoritative voice of power, bids you turn, and no longer advance in opposition to your Sovereign. Let the potsherds, he exclaims, strive with the potsherds of the earth, but woe to him who striveth with his Maker. My hearers, while you neglect religion, you are striving with your Maker, and all the laws of his kingdom, all the perfections of his nature, all the dispensations of his providence, all the contents of his word, are against you.

And now survey once more and collectively, the vast assembly which is arrayed against you, an assembly composed of all the good on earth, of all the spirits of the just in heaven, of all

the holy angels, with God's eternal Son, and the ever living Jehovah at their head? Before such an assembly, what are you? And whom will you array against it? You may indeed assemble all the wicked on earth; you may call for the departed spirits of all wicked men, who have gone to their own place; and you may add the spirits of disobedience, the apostate angels, to swell the throng; but these are all whom you can assemble. No holy angels, no good man, in heaven or earth, will join your unhallowed host, or countenance you in disobeying or neglecting the Sovereign whom they love.

Surely then, those of you who acknowledge the truth of the Scriptures, will no more boast of, or rely upon the number which swells your ranks. Indeed, methinks a view of those who are with you, can scarcely be more pleasing than a view of those who are against you. To see all evil beings on your side, is little less appalling, than to see all good beings on the opposite side. And remember that what you have now heard described, you will one day see. You will see all the different classes and beings, who have been mentioned, assembled at the judgment day. On one side, you will see all wicked men and wicked spirits; on the other, all good men, all holy angels, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the everlasting Father. And if you continue what you now are, you will see all the former arrayed on your side, and all the latter against you. And then, if not now, you will feel, that there is a great assembly against you, and that to have such an assembly against you, is indeed an evil above all things to be deprecated.

I need not, my irreligious hearers, repeat remarks which I have often made respecting the pain which it gives me to address you in this manner. Nor need I again remind you, that my only object is to promote your happiness. The use which I wish to make of the subject is, to persuade you to leave the host to which you now belong, and to join the assembly which is arrayed against it. There is not an individual in the assembly referred to, who is not prepared to receive and welcome you with cordial affection. All the good on earth, would gladly embrace you as brethren; holy beings in heaven would rejoice over you, as they do over every sinner that repenteth. The Lord Jesus Christ is ready to receive you, and God the Father to forgive you, and adopt you as his children. All, all combine

with one voice to cry, Come with us, and we will do you good. Do you reply, we would join you, were there not so many hypocrites in your number. My hearers, we are not inviting you to join us. We are inviting you to join the armies of the Lamb, the camp of God, to join an assembly composed of none but the truly good. Surely, in such an assembly, there are no hypocrites. All hypocrites belong to the host which we wish you to leave. They will, as inspiration assures us, have their portion with unbelievers, for unbelievers they in reality are. If you wish to be separate from them here, and hereafter, you must join those who worship God in spirit and in truth. Choose then, my hearers, choose your associates, and while choosing them, remember that you are choosing them for eternity. Remember too that all the goodness in the universe is on one side, and all the evil on the other. There is not a good man among those you are invited to leave. There is not an evil being among those you are invited to join.

The subject is well calculated to encourage and animate those of you, who are truly religious. You see to how numerous, and how glorious an assembly you belong. When you look around upon the state of the world, you perhaps sometimes feel, like the prophet, as if you were almost alone. But if your eyes are opened to see the great assembly which has been described, you will see that there are more with you, than against you, more with you, than with your adversaries. You are come unto Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And O, what an honor and privilege is it, to compose one of such an assembly as this! What an honor and privilege would it be, were the assembly much smaller than it is! And if it be an honor and privilege now, what will it be at the great day, in which all shall be assembled before the judgment seat of Christ! What happiness to hear him acknowledge you as his, to hear him say, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. You were not ashamed to acknowledge me in the midst of an ungodly world, and now I will not be ashamed of you. You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things; enter ye, into the joy of your Lord.

But remember, that if union to such an assembly be a great honor and privilege, it also imposes great obligations. What ought they to be, in temper and conduct, who profess to belong to such an assembly as this! How white, how unspotted ought to be their garments! How should their whole lives testify to whom they belong! And how great and how just will be the punishment of those false disciples, who, while they pretend to belong to this holy assembly, only disgrace it by their ungodly lives, and appear as spots and blemishes in the midst of it. Not long shall they be permitted thus to dishonor it; for he, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, will come to purify his church, and to cast into outer darkness those who have assumed his name only to profane it, and professed his religion only to dishonor it. Then he will say to his church, Rejoice, rejoice, for from henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumsised and the unclean. Then he will present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or imperfection, or any such thing; but perfectly holy and without blemish. What manner of persons then ought ye to be! As he who hath called us is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because he hath said, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

SERMON LXIV.

WHY THE WICKED ARE SPARED FOR A SEASON.

For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. — Genesis xv. 16.

These words were addressed by Jehovah to Abraham, when he first promised to give his posterity the land of Canaan. While giving him this promise God informed him, that it would not be fulfilled till after the lapse of a considerable number of years; and assigned the reason of this delay in the words of our text. In the fourth generation, says he, thy seed shall come into the land again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. As if he had said, The putting of your posterity in possession of the land of Canaan, will be attended with the destruction of its present inhabitants, the Amorites; but they are not yet ripe for destruction; for the measure of their iniquity is not yet full. But when their iniquity is full, your posterity shall return hither, and the Amorites shall be destroyed.

This passage, taken in connection with its attending circumstances, teaches us the following important truth; God waits until sinners have filled up a certain measure of iniquity, before he executes the sentence by which they are doomed to destruction; but when this measure is full, execution certainly and immediately follows. To explain, establish and improve this remark is my present design.

I. In explanation of this remark, I observe,

1. That God is under no obligation to suspend the destruction of sinners until the measure of their iniquity is full, or even to suspend it for a single hour. The life of every sinner is already forfeited. By the very first sin of which he is guilty, he transgresses the law of God; and that law pronounces sentence of death on every transgressor. Its language is, the soul that sinneth shall die. This sentence God may with the most perfect justice execute, at any moment, on every sinner. Hence the prophet, speaking in the name of his countrymen says, It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. This is the same as if he had said, Justice dooms us to be consumed; we deserve to be consumed; it is mercy alone which spares us. This is equally true of all sinners. There is nothing but the sovereign, unmerited mercy of God, which keeps any of them one moment out of everlasting burnings. But God is not obliged to exercise this mercy. He may, if he chooses, adhere rather to the strict rules of justice. He may execute the sentence of a just law, whenever he pleases. He cannot, therefore, be under the least obligation to delay the punishment of any sinner, for a single moment. As in human governments, when a criminal is capitally convicted and sentenced, the supreme executive may order execution to take place immediately, or defer it for a week or a month; so God may take the sinner's forfeited life this moment, or grant him a reprieve for one or for many years. Such a reprieve he usually grants, as he did in the case of the Amorites. We remark,

2. That when we say, God waits until sinners have filled up a certain measure of iniquity before he destroys them, we do not mean that he waits upon all, till they have filled up the same measure. In other words, we do not mean that all sinners are equal in sinfulness and guilt at the hour of their death. To assert this would be contrary to fact and daily observation. We very often see youthful sinners, and those not of the worst stamp, cut down and hurried to the retributions of eternity; while others, apparently much more guilty, are suffered to become old and hardened in sin; and to fill up a much larger measure of iniquity. It is therefore evident, that God does not allow all sinners to live till they have filled up the same measure of iniquity. In this, no less than in other respects, he acts like a sovereign. He determines with respect to each particular

sinner, how long a season of probation shall be granted him, how large a measure of guilt he shall be allowed to fill up, before sentence of death is inflicted. But when the measure, be it greater or smaller, is full, the sinner's destruction immediately follows. I remark,

3. That every impenitent sinner is constantly filling up the measure of his iniquity; and thus constantly ripening for destruction. This is evident from the fact, that all the feelings, thoughts, words and actions, of the impenitent, are sinful. They are so, because none of them proceed from that supreme love to God, which the law requires. They are so, because none of them are prompted by a desire to promote the glory of God; at the promotion of which we are commanded to aim in every thing we do. Agreeably, the Scriptures assert, that the ploughing of the wicked is sin, and that even the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. Since then, impenitent sinners are constantly sinning, they are constantly filling up the measure of their iniquities. There is not a day, not a waking hour, or moment, in which the dreadful work does not advance towards its completion. Hence the apostle, addressing impenitent sinners, says, Not considering that the goodness of God, that is, his goodness in sparing thy life, is designed to lead thee to repentance, thou, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works. Now sinners treasure up wrath, when they fill up the measure of their iniquities; for since God will recompense every man according to his works, it follows, that those whose sins are most numerous and aggravated will suffer in the greatest degree the wrath of God.

4. Though the measure of every impenitent sinner's iniquity is constantly filling up; it fills much more rapidly in some cases, and at some seasons, than at others. Some sinners appear to sin with great eagerness, boldness and diligence; to sin with all their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, as if they were determined to see how much guilt they can contract in a short space. Others, who are apparently much less vicious and abandoned, fill up the measure of their sins with equal rapidity, in consequence of enjoying and abusing great religious privi-

leges, opportunities and means of grace. Indeed, it may be laid down as a general rule, from which there are no exceptions, that the measure of every impenitent sinner's guilt fills rapidly, in proportion to the light, the conviction, and the means of moral improvement against which he sins. As the productions of the earth ripen most speedily where they enjoy in the greatest degree a rich soil, frequent showers, and the genial beams of the sun, so sinners ripen most speedily for destruction, when they are favored in the greatest degree with religious privileges and opportunities. When a sinner is visited by some dangerous disease; is brought apparently near to death; is in consequence awakened, alarmed, and led to promise, that should his life be spared, he will devote it to God; and when, on being restored to health, he forgets his promise, and returns to his sinful courses, he adds very largely to his former guilt; more perhaps than he could have done in whole years of uninterrupted health. Similar remarks may be made respecting those who lose their possessions, their children, or near friends, without deriving any spiritual advantage from the loss. There are, perhaps, no threatenings in the Bible, more terrible than those, which are denounced against such as do not repent when under the stroke of God's correcting hand. To some who were guilty of this conduct, God says, Surely, this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die. But never do sinners fill up the measure of their guilt more rapidly, than when they sin against conviction; against the remonstrances of an enlightened conscience, and the influences of the Spirit of God. Sinners who are guilty of this conduct, who stifle or lose religious impressions, do more perhaps to fill up the measure of their iniquities, than they had previously done during the whole course of their lives. This, of all sins, approaches most nearly to the sin against the Holy Ghost, that sin for which there is no forgiveness. Having thus endeavored to illustrate, we proceed.

II. To prove the assertion, which was drawn from our text.

1. The truth of this assertion may be proved from other passages of Scripture. St. Paul informs us that the conduct of the Jews tended to fill up their sins alway; for, he adds, wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. By the mouth of the prophet Joel, God says, Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe, for their wickedness is great. And, using the same figure,

St. John informs us that he saw an angel seated on a cloud, having in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple of God, and said to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the time is come for thee to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.

These passages are of the same import with the remark drawn from our text. The angel with the sharp sickle, represents the instruments which God employs to execute his judgments upon sinners. This angel remained inactive until he received a command to thrust in his sickle and reap; and the reason assigned for this command was, that the harvest of the earth was ripe; or, as the prophet expresses it, that the wickedness of men was great. In other words, the measure of their iniquity was full; and of course they were ripe for destruction. Then, and not till then, they were cast into the wine-press of the wrath of God; a figurative expression, denoting the prison and the punishment which await impenitent sinners, when death shall remove them from the world.

The same truths appear to be taught by the parable of the barren fig-tree. This tree was sentenced to be cut down, on account of its barrenness, but a reprieve of one year was granted, at the expiration of which period, if it still remained barren, the sentence was to be executed. So sinners are sentenced to die by the divine law, but they are spared for an appointed time, till all means have been used with them in vain, and the measure of their iniquity is full. Then mercy ceases to plead for them, and death cuts them down, as fit only to serve for fuel to the fire of divine wrath. The axe, says John, is laid at the root of the tree; every tree, therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. My friends, every impenitent sinner is a barren tree. The axe of divine justice is laid at its root, and at the appointed time the sentence will go forth, Cut it down! why cumbereth it the ground?

2. The truth of the remark under consideration is further proved, by the history of God's dealings with sinful nations and individuals. Thus in the days of Noah, the long-suffering of

God waited while the ark was preparing; but when the appointed limit of one hundred and twenty years was reached, when the guilty inhabitants of the world had filled up the measure of their iniquity, the flood came and swept them all away. Another instance of the same kind we have in the history of the Israelites who came out of Egypt. They murmured, rebelled, and provoked God in various ways; but were still spared, till they reached the borders of the promised land. Then, just as they were ready to enter it, they rebelled again; and this last act of rebellion filled the measure of their iniquity to the very brim. In consequence, they were turned back into the wilderness, and all above twenty years of age were doomed there to perish, and never to see the land which they had despised; nor could any intercession prevail with God to revoke the sentence. Many similar instances may be found in the history of succeeding generations of the Jews, and of some of their kings; and one, still more striking, occurred in the time of our Saviour. He declares that the generation then living, were filling up the measure of their fathers. Soon after this, it became full; and the nation was destroyed without mercy. I proceed,

III. To make some improvement of the subject:

1. From this subject you may learn, my impenitent hearers, why God spares sinners long after their lives are forfeited, and why he spares you. It is because the measure of your iniquity is not yet full. You may, as former generations of sinners have done, encourage yourselves in a sinful course on account of his delay. As the wise man expresses it, Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, your hearts may be fully set in you to do evil. You hear, indeed, the threatenings of God's violated law denounced against you, but you do not yet feel their execution; and like those of old, who asked, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things remain as they were, you may be asking in your hearts, Where are any proofs of God's anger against us to be seen? All things pursue their course. The sun shines brightly over our heads; the showers of heaven descend upon us; the earth produces food in abundance for our support, and sickness and death do not invade us. It cannot be that God is angry, while he thus loads us with favors.

But remember, just in this manner were former generations of sinners favored, and just in this manner they encouraged themselves in sin. For one hundred and twenty years before the flood, the sun rose daily, and pursued his accustomed course; the earth brought forth its fruits in abundance, and nothing in nature foretold the impending ruin. Thus too it was in Sodom; they ate, they drank, they married and were given in marriage, and *knew not* till the flood came and swept them all away. Remember our Saviour's declaration, that God causes his sun to shine, and his showers to descend on the evil and unthankful, no less than upon the righteous. Remember, that the wretch who is doomed to be blasted by a thunderbolt, just hears the thunder roll, and sees the vengeful lightnings spending their fury at a distance. He little thinks that the cloud which he sees, thus distantly rising, bears his fate in its bosom. Careless and thoughtless, he pursues his way; while the cloud rises, condenses, blackens, and passes over his head. At length, the destined, fatal moment arrives; the bolt falls, his blackened corpse lies prostrate on the ground, and his naked soul stands trembling before the tribunal of God.

So you, my impenitent hearers, now hear the thunder of God's threatenings murmur at a distance. Its flashes daily strike some of your fellow sinners, the measure of whose iniquity is full; but as yet, they strike not you. The measure of your guilt is, however, fast filling up; the last drop which it can contain will soon fall into it, and then death, who is now kept at a distance, will instantly find you out. God says respecting sinners, Their feet shall slide in due time. Till that due, that appointed time arrives, your feet will seem to stand firm; but then they will slide in a moment, and terrible will be your fall.

Meanwhile, no sinner can form even a probable conjecture, how near the destined moment of his fall may be. He cannot see the measure of his iniquity. He cannot know how large a measure God may spare him to fill up. He cannot know how many more sins are wanting to fill it. All respecting it is darkness and uncertainty. One thing, however, is certain; that the measure of every sinner's guilt fills much faster than he is aware. Who, says the Psalmist, can understand his errors? That is, who can know how often, or how greatly, he offends? Was there ever a spendthrift, or a man careless of his affairs,

whose debts did not increase far beyond his expectations? Much more does the guilt of careless sinners increase beyond all their erroneous calculations. Hence the inspired writers inform us, that the ruin of sinners is often most near, when they imagine it to be at the greatest distance. While they are promising themselves peace and safety, says an apostle, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape.

And, my hearers, have not many of you, judging even by your own imperfect knowledge, and erroneous standard, reason to fear that your measure of iniquity is nearly full? Reflect a moment, how many days and years you have spent in constantly neglecting and offending God. Think of the sins of childhood, of youth, and of riper years; think of your sins in action, in word, in thought, and in feeling. Think of your sins of omission, as well as of those of commission; how many things you have left undone which you ought to have done. Remember, too, what privileges, opportunities and means of grace you have enjoyed; how many sermons, warnings, and invitations you have slighted; against what light and conviction you have sinned. For many years you have been in a situation peculiarly favorable for filling up the measure of your iniquity. Many, perhaps most of you have been visited with afflictions. Some of you have been brought near to death; some of you have lost property, children and friends; and you have all seen sufficient to convince you of the transient, unsatisfying nature of every temporal object. All of you have lived in a day when religion is reviving, and its influences greatly extending, not only around you, but through the world. Many of you have felt the power of divine truth; your consciences have been awakened; you have been, in a greater or less degree, alarmed; the Spirit of God has invited you, and you have seen many of your relatives, friends or acquaintances, yield to his influence.

Consider all this, and you will, I think, find great reason to fear that the measure of your iniquity must be nearly full. Certainly, if it is not so, your appointed measure is exceedingly large, and, of course, your punishment will be proportionably great; for the cup of wrath which every sinner must drink, will be in exact proportion to the measure of guilt which he has filled up. To those of you who are far advanced in life, these remarks apply with peculiar force. It is certain that according to

the course of nature, you cannot have many years to live; it is equally certain, therefore, that your measure of iniquity must be, not only exceedingly large, but nearly full. And O how harrowing, how terrible is the thought, that you have spent a long life in doing nothing but fill up the measure of your iniquity, and of course in treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Should death come, and find you impenitent, better, far better would it be for you to have died in infancy; nay, infinitely better had it been for you never to have been born.

Perhaps the younger part of my impenitent hearers may abuse these remarks. Perhaps you may infer from them that your measure of iniquity is very far from being full; and that you may therefore safely spend a few more years in the practice of sin. But remember, the young die, as well as the old. Remember that God may have determined to spare you, only till you shall have filled up a comparatively small measure of iniquity. It is a very ancient remark, a remark which has been verified by the observations of many centuries, that God sometimes makes very quick work with sinners. Or, to use the language of inspiration, he finishes the work and cuts it short in righteousness. And should you live to old age, you may not become religious. You may live only to fill up the measure of your iniquity. The young, then, as well as the old, have reason to tremble and to repent.

2. From this subject, my hearers, you may learn the indispensable necessity of an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Though you are constantly adding to your sins, to diminish them is beyond your power. You cannot take one drop from the cup of your iniquities. You cannot even refrain from filling it; for while you continue to neglect the Saviour, you are constantly adding sin to sin; your actions, words, thoughts and feelings are all sinful. Yet you must cease to commit new sins, and those which you have already committed must be blotted out, or you will perish forever. Christ alone can enable you to do either. His blood cleanses from all sin; he is able to cast all your iniquities into the depths of the sea; and he can renovate your hearts, and render you holy, so that you shall no longer treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. To him, then, every motive urges you to fly without delay. The delay of a single hour may be fatal. There must arrive a time when the

cup of your iniquities will be filled to the brim; when the addition of a single drop will cause it to overflow. With respect to some of you, that time may have arrived. A neglect of this warning, the loss of this Sabbath, may be the additional drop, which shall cause the measure of your iniquities to overflow. Then it will be forever too late. Then Christ himself cannot save you, will not plead for you, but will assent to your condemnation. Now, then, while it is an accepted time and a day of salvation, look to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

3. There is an important sense in which many of the preceding remarks are applicable to Christians. Those of you who have been such for any considerable time, have often, when contemplating your sins, and especially when in a religious declension, been ready to conclude that God would visit you with some severe temporal affliction, as a mark of his displeasure. But instead of this, you have found him returning to you in mercy, healing your backslidings, and putting the song of salvation into your mouths. Having often found this to be the case, you may begin to conclude that it will always be so, and thus you may be insensibly led to become careless and slothful, to think lightly of sin, and not to guard against the first symptoms of declension. But if so, God will, in a terrible manner, convince you of your mistake, and make you to know experimentally that it is an evil and bitter thing to forsake him. He remembers, though we are prone to forget, how often he has displayed the sovereignty of his mercy in pardoning us, when we deserved correction; and sooner or later, when the measure of your backslidings shall be full, he will, by some severe temporal affliction or spiritual trial, bring all your sins to remembrance, and teach you that even his children shall not offend him with impunity. It is to his professing people that he says, Because I have purged thee and thou wast not purged, that is, because I have often healed thy backslidings, and cleansed thee from thy sins, and yet thou didst return to them again;—therefore thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.

And permit me, my brethren, to remind you, that should we abuse the present instance of God's sovereign mercy, we shall

have reason to expect some such token of his displeasure. We had often forsaken him, and he had as often restored us. But, unmindful of this mercy, we again forsook him, and departed from him farther than before. Yet he has once more restored to us the joys of his salvation, and visited us with his free Spirit. And now if we forsake him again after this, it will be strange indeed, if he does not visit our iniquities with stripes and our backslidings with a rod.

SERMON LXV.

LOVERS OF PLEASURE DESCRIBED AND WARNED.

Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.—2 Timothy iii. 4.

These words describe a character which is, alas! but too frequently found in this sinful world; a character too, which most men are apt to regard with a partial and favorable eye, especially when it is met with among the young. If nothing worse is known of a man, than that he is rather too fond of what are commonly called the innocent pleasures and amusements of life, he is considered by the bulk of mankind as a moral, amiable character, and almost good enough to be admitted into heaven; even though it may be evident from his whole conduct, that he is a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. It is evident from the context, however, that St. Paul, or rather the Holy Spirit by whom he was inspired, did not view this character with so favorable an eye. On the contrary, he classes those to whom it belongs, with the grossest and most notorious offenders; offenders, whose prevalence gives an aspect of peculiar danger to the age in which they live. This know, says he, that in the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy; without natural affection, despisers of them that are good, fierce, incontinent, false accusers, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. From the company in which these lovers of pleasure are here

placed, we may easily infer what the apostle thought of them, and what is thought of them by him whose message he brought.

Whether the perilous times, of which he speaks, have arrived, or not, we shall not pretend to determine; but certain it is, that very many are to be found among us, who, if we may judge from their conduct, are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. To show, by a few simple marks, who belong to this number, is our present design.

I. This number includes all whose fondness for pleasure leads them to violate the commands of God. Nothing is more certain, or more universally known, than that men never willingly offend a person whom they love, for the sake of one whom they do not love. Equally certain is it, that when men are constrained to give up one of two things, they always give up that which they love the least. This being the case, it is undeniably evident, that all who provoke, or sin against God, for the sake of any pleasure whatever, do love that pleasure more than God. Now there are various ways in which men may sin against God in the pursuit of pleasure.

In the first place, they may, like our first parents, sin by indulging in forbidden pleasures, in those pleasures which are in themselves sinful. Among these, must be reckoned the pleasures, if they may be called such, which result from gluttony, intemperance, and sensuality; for these are all most pointedly forbidden by the word of God. Revellings also, or assemblies for riotous dissipation, are expressly mentioned among the works of the flesh; and even foolish talking and jesting are forbidden by name. These, therefore, and all similar pleasures, which are expressly forbidden by the word of God, are in themselves, on all occasions and in all circumstances, sinful; and those who pursue them are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

In the second place, pleasures and pursuits which are not in themselves sinful, or not expressly forbidden, may become sinful by being pursued in an inordinate, improper manner, and by leading us to neglect duties which are expressly enjoined. This is the case with all the pleasures of this life, even with those that are in themselves most innocent; such as the pleasures resulting from friendship, from literary pursuits, or from the enjoyments of the family circle. All these, though innocent in themselves, may and often do become sinful, in consequence of

interfering with our duties to God and man, or of being pursued in an inordinate, unseasonable, or improper manner. For instance, we are expressly commanded to redeem the time, to pray without ceasing, to glorify God in all that we do, to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Christ. Consequently, the neglect of any of these duties is a sin, a breach of the divine precepts, and therefore, if we indulge even in the most innocent pleasures, in such a manner as to waste our time, to lose opportunities of glorifying God, to foster a spirit of self indulgence, to encroach upon the season which ought to be allotted to prayer, or to unfit us for the performance of that duty, it is certain that we pursue pleasure in a sinful manner; and if we allow ourselves in such indulgences, if this conduct is in any manner habitual, it incontestably proves that we are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

In the same number must be included,

II. All who are led by a fondness for pleasure to indulge in amusements which they suspect may be wrong, or which they do not feel certain are right.

When we love any person supremely, we are careful to avoid, not only those things which we know will displease him, but such as we suspect may do it. We always think it best, in such cases, to be on the safe side, and to avoid everything which we do not feel confident will not be displeasing. It is the same, with respect to God. Those who love him supremely will avoid, not only what they know to be sinful, but what they suspect may be sinful; they will abstain not only from evil, but from the very appearance of evil; and if they are not certain that any proposed indulgence is wrong, yet if they do not know it to be right, they will reject it. They will say, there can certainly be no sin in not pursuing this offered pleasure, but there may be something wrong in pursuing it; and thus God may be displeased, and we will therefore keep on the safe side, and not even incur the risk of offending him, for the sake of any earthly gratification whatever. If any are disposed to consider this as unreasonable and unnecessary strictness, we would refer them to the words of St. Paul, in the 14th chapter of the epistle to the Romans. He there solemnly assures us, that Whatsoever is not of faith is sin; that is, as is evident from the context, whatever a man does, which he is not fully persuaded is right,

is sinful to him, even if it were not sinful in itself. And again he says, Whosoever thinketh anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean; that is, if a man suspects any indulgence to be wrong, it is wrong to him, for in partaking of it he acts against his conscience, and feels self-condemned.

All, therefore, who indulge in pleasures which they suspect may be wrong; all whose consciences condemn them in the silence of the night, after returning from a party of pleasure; all who are obliged to use many endeavors to quiet their consciences, and to persuade themselves that there is nothing wrong in their conduct, certainly pursue pleasure in a sinful manner, and are therefore lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; since they will pursue pleasure, though they do not know but in doing it they are offending him. Happy is he, saith the apostle, who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. But these persons do condemn themselves, in the very things that they allow. And again he says, He that doubteth is damned if he eat; that is, he that doubts whether anything be right, and yet will practise it, is condemned by his own conscience, and will be condemned of God, unless he repents.

III. Those are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God, who find more satisfaction in the pursuit and enjoyment of worldly pleasure, than they do in his service. That the more we love any object, the more satisfaction we find in its enjoyment, all will allow. This being the case, if we can ascertain in what a man finds the greatest pleasure, we can determine at once what he most loves; for no man is a hypocrite in his pleasures.

To apply this remark to the case before us: If a man finds more delight in the service and enjoyment of God, than in earthly pleasures; if he forsakes them all to retire into his closet and converse with his Maker and Redeemer; if he finds no book like the Bible, no place like God's house, no day like the Sabbath, no employment like that of prayer and praise, no society like that of God's people, then it is evident that he loves all pleasures less than God. On the contrary, if he finds more satisfaction in worldly than in religious pleasures; if he prefers a history, a play, or a novel, to the Bible; if he feels happier in a small select party, in a theatre or ball-room, than he does in his closet, or in the house of God; in a word, if he cannot

seriously say to his Maker, Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee; then it is as evident as any thing can be, that he is a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. There is no more doubt respecting his true character, than if he were openly immoral and profane, or than there will be at the judgment day.

Lastly: All who are deterred from immediately embracing the Saviour, and commencing a religious life, by an unwillingness to renounce the pleasures of the world, are most certainly lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. That men are always ready to renounce any object, for the sake of something which they consider more valuable, all will allow. Consequently, when Christ invites sinners to come through him to God; when God seconds the invitation by saying, Come ye out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing, it is evident that all who refuse or delay to comply, from an unwillingness to renounce their worldly pleasures, are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. There is nothing but this preference of pleasure to God, that can possibly prevent them. Christ has opened the way for them to come to God; he offers to lead them to his Father, and to plead in their behalf. But they will not comply, though heaven is the reward of compliance, and eternal wretchedness the consequence of a refusal. How very much then must they love pleasure more than God, since these powerful inducements cannot persuade them to forsake their pleasures and come to him.

Having thus endeavored to show to whom the character mentioned in our text belongs, we shall proceed to show, in the next place, that, whatever may be thought of them by the world, or whatever they may think of themselves, they are in reality in a most sinful, guilty, and dangerous condition.

That the apostle considered them as sinful, in no common degree, is evident, as has been already observed, from the company in which he has placed them. It is still farther evident from the description which he gives of them in some of the verses succeeding the text. For instance, he there informs us, that such are persons of corrupt minds. That they must be so will be evident on a moment's reflection; for what can be a more satisfactory proof of a wretchedly corrupt state of mind, in a rational, immortal being, than a preference of unsatisfying, transitory, sinful pleasures, to his Creator; to a Being of infinite

loveliness, excellence and perfection, the Author and Giver of every good and perfect gift? Those who are guilty of this are idolators in the worst sense of the term. Idolatry is a breach of the first and great command, Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Now these persons have another god before the true God; they have an idol which they love more than they do him; an idol, to which they sacrifice not only their time, their attention, their talents, but even their immortal souls; an idol, too, of the most worthless and contemptible kind. Though they are urged and entreated by the tender mercies of God, not to be conformed to this world, but to present themselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is their most reasonable service; yet they obstinately and ungratefully refuse to comply, and choose rather to sacrifice themselves on the altar of worldly pleasure, thus robbing God of his due, and ruining the souls he has given them, for the loss of which the whole world can make no compensation. Well, then, may it be said, that they are persons of corrupt minds.

In the second place, the apostle informs us, that they resist the truth. This they must do, for their deeds are evil. Christ assures us, that every one who doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. Such persons hate the truth, because the truth condemns and exposes their sinful but beloved pleasures. Its natural tendency is to separate them from their pleasures, and lead them to God; but they resist this tendency; they refuse to give up their sinful pleasures, and labor in various ways to persuade themselves that they are innocent, and that no evil consequences can result from their pursuit. Hence they resist all attempts to turn them from the error of their ways, and all the convictions which at times arise in their minds; the preached word does them no good; they quarrel with those truths which condemn them, as unreasonably strict and severe, and the language of their hearts is, We have loved our idols, and after them we will go.

Hence, thirdly, they are represented as despisers of good men. They consider such men whose conduct reproves them, as the enemies of their happiness, and ridicule them as rigid, morose, superstitious or hypocritical persons, who are needlessly strict and scrupulous, and who will neither enjoy the world them-

selves, nor allow others to do it. Hence, there are perhaps no characters who hate and despise the truly pious, more bitterly, than those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. This is to be expected; for the royal Preacher has long since informed us, that as an unjust man is an abomination to the just, so he that is upright in his way is an abomination to the wicked. The sensual, voluptuous Sadducees, those ancient lovers of pleasure, hated and despised Christ and his disciples, even more, if possible, than did the hypocritical, self-righteous Pharisees.

Lastly, the persons we are describing are represented as being dead in trespasses and sins. She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth; and this is equally true of both sexes. They are dead, as it respects the great end of their existence; dead to every thing that is good, dead in the sight of a holy God, loathsome to him as a corpse is to us, and as unfit for the society of the living Jehovah, as the naturally dead are for the society of the living. You need not be told, that, however dear the persons of our children and friends are to us, while living, yet after they are dead, after the animating, life-supporting spirit has departed, we wish to bury them out of our sight. They cannot then enjoy our presence, nor can we take the least pleasure in theirs; on the contrary, they soon become intolerably loathsome and shocking; and were we unable to remove them, they would soon render our habitations insupportable. Thus, though God loves his creatures as such, yet when they become dead in sin, he ceases to love them; they become exceedingly hateful in his sight, even as a corpse is in ours. Nor are they any more capable of enjoying him. To use his own language, his soul loathes them, and their souls abhor him. Never, therefore, while thus dead in sin, can they be admitted into heaven. They are evidently unfit for it; they could not enjoy it; for there, none of their beloved pleasures will be found. Besides, God will no more suffer them to enter heaven, than we would suffer the finest apartments in our houses to be filled with the putrefying corpses of the dead; for heaven is the habitation of his holiness and glory, and he has solemnly declared, that nothing shall enter it that defileth. They, therefore, who love pleasure more than they love God, will not, cannot be admitted into heaven, unless they repent, and wash away their defilement

in the blood of Christ. And if they are not admitted into heaven, there is but one other place to which they can go at death, and that place will be their eternal habitation.

Such is the character, and such will be the inevitable doom of all who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. This being the case, it is surely of infinite importance, that we should ascertain whether this is our character. Permit me, then, with the utmost tenderness, and with a most anxious solicitude for your best interests, your true pleasure, to ask all of you, especially the young, Are not some of you lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? Do none of you indulge in pleasures which are in themselves sinful, which tend to ruin you for this world as well as for the next, and which are most clearly forbidden in the word of God? If not, and I would hope this is the case, do none of you indulge in the pursuit of what are called innocent pleasures, in such a manner as leads to sin, to sins of omission at least; in such a manner as leads you to waste precious time, to utter innumerable idle words, to neglect watchfulness, self-denial and prayer, and unfit you for the right performance of these duties? Are you not often in places and engaged in scenes, in which you would not wish the day of judgment or the hour of death to find you? In a word, do you not pursue pleasure in a way which is inconsistent with doing every thing to God's glory, with making preparation for death, with obeying the commands of Christ, and with securing the salvation of your souls? Do none of you indulge in pleasures which you suspect are not entirely innocent, for which your consciences reprove you after you return from them, and which you sometimes find it difficult to justify, even to yourselves? Do you not find more satisfaction in these pleasures than in the service and enjoyment of God; and are you not deterred from complying with your convictions, and immediately commencing a religious life, by an unwillingness to give up these fascinating, but pernicious and ruinous pleasures?

Yes, my friends, you cannot but know, and I know that this is the case with some of you; and I, yet not I, but the word of God declares, that all with whom it is the case, are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Yes, you love these irrational, transitory, unsatisfying pleasures better than the God who made you, better than the Saviour who died for you, better

than the salvation of your own souls, better than all the joys of heaven. Hence you are dead while you live, dead in trespasses and sins, dead to every thing good, dead to the great object for which you were created, dead in the sight of God, and utterly unfit for admission into heaven. Hence, also, you resist the truth. This is the reason that the preaching of the gospel does you no good. You are often in the house of God, you hear what is said; you appear solemn, and perhaps at times, are affected by the truth, so that one would think you, like the young ruler, not far from the kingdom of heaven. But you go from the house of God. The world resumes its fatal power over your minds. Your love of pleasure revives. The enchantress waves her magic wand, and beckons you to some of the various temples where she is worshipped. You obey the signal. Your inclinations stifle the voice of conscience, and hurry you away. I see them carry you to some resort of pleasure, falsely so called; there I see some of you engaged in gay and trifling conversation, which banishes all serious thoughts from your own minds, and from the minds of those with whom you converse. I see others led to places where the gaming table is spread, where the sound of the viol is heard, where the circling glass is employed to drown reflection, and brace up the drooping spirits in the pursuit of pleasure. I hear the plausible arguments, the entreaties, the sneers and sarcasms which are employed to overcome the firmness and banish the scruples of those, who are at first unwilling to join in the mad career. I see and no longer wonder, that the truth is resisted. I no longer wonder that a preached gospel is rendered ineffectual. I no longer wonder that so few are rescued from the whirlpool of pleasure, or that I see its fatal flood strewed with the wrecks of immortal souls. I rather wonder that any escape; that I see some who have reached the shore, and while with a joyful surprise, I hear them singing the praises of their great Deliverer, I am constrained to cry, Truly, this is the finger of God! For what power, short of his, can rescue any from these bewitching scenes, where the Tempter, in the mask of Pleasure, spreads his most subtle and fatal snares! These are the scenes where he carries on, with the greatest success, the diabolical work of temptation and death. These are the places where thought is banished, where religion is forgotten, where God, and death and eternity are kept out of sight, where

conviction is stifled, where conscience is seared, where the heart is hardened, where the good resolutions, made in a serious hour, are broken; where the young and yet unhardened sinner is gradually trained up to vice and infidelity; where the ruin of millions of immortal souls has been finally sealed.

This being the case, we appeal to yourselves, my friends, whether we ought to keep silence, when we see many for whose souls we watch, as one that must give an account, flocking to these scenes of temptation and ruin? No, we cannot, we dare not be silent. Though you will perhaps resent this attack on your favorite pleasures, and consider us as your enemy because we tell you the truth; yet whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, we must speak, and give you warning from God. Not that we hope that our unassisted endeavors or warnings will avail. No, we know too well the strength of your attachment to those pleasures, to hope this. We know too well the specious names by which their deformity is veiled, and the plausible arguments by which the application of these names is justified. Once we thought that these arguments were conclusive, that these specious names were properly applied; that pleasures which displease and dishonor God, waste precious time, and lead to the neglect of duty and the ruin of the soul, might be called innocent pleasures. Yes, with shame I confess that I once believed this. But it was all an error, a delusion resulting from that dizzy whirl of mind, that stupefaction of the nobler powers of the soul, which is produced by circling round the vortex of worldly amusement. That Power who has convinced me of my mistake, is equally able to convince and save you. This is all my hope, all my dependence, and to this Power I look for aid, while from the shore of this fatal, irresistible whirlpool, I call to those whom it is still sweeping away. Help me, ye people of God, with your prayers. Hear and help thy servant, O thou prayer-hearing, wonder-working God, while in thy name he endeavors to pluck thy creatures as brands from eternal burnings.

Ye creatures of the Most High! ye immortal spirits! ye probationers for eternity! listen to this call, to the voice of Jehovah. How long will ye continue to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? How long continue to circle round that vortex which draws its wretched captives into the gulf that has no

bottom; how long lie buried in slumber and death, dreaming of pleasure, while your Creator is displeased, while your Saviour is neglected, while death is approaching, while eternity is at the door, and your unprepared spirits are momentarily exposed to endless perdition! What meanest thou, O sleeper! to slumber while this is thy condition! Is it a time for mirth, when the Judge stands before the door, crying, Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep! Awake, then, thou that sleepest; escape for thy life; look not behind thee, renounce thy vain pleasures, deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow Christ. Say not, my pleasures are too dear to part with. I know they are dear, dear to you as a right hand or a right eye. But what then? It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two eyes, to be cast into hell fire. Say not, if we renounce our pleasures, we shall never more be happy. Rather you will never be happy till you do renounce them, and seek happiness where alone it is to be found. Were the Samaritans unhappy when they had renounced sinful pleasures and embraced the cross of Christ? No; there was great joy in that city. Was the Ethiopian nobleman unhappy, after he had believed on a crucified Redeemer? No; he went on his way rejoicing. Renounce your idolatrous love of pleasure, and this joy will be yours. Enter the ways of wisdom, and you will find them ways of pleasantness. Cease to drink at your broken cisterns which can hold no water, and you shall drink of those rivers of pleasures which flow forever at the right hand of God. Imitate the example of Christ, who began early to say, I must be about my Father's business, and you shall have that rest, that peace which he gives, and rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Do any say, we would gladly renounce our unsatisfying pleasures, and follow Christ, but we feel unable to do so. We fear that when the hour of temptation comes, we shall forget and break our resolutions, and return to the world! My friends, the power of Christ can render you victorious over the strongest temptations. His grace is sufficient for you; and if you can consent that he should take away that inordinate fondness for pleasure that enslaves you, he will do it. You perhaps recollect that, in the account we gave you last Sabbath, it was mentioned, that when the young were persuaded to renounce their vain

amusements, a glorious revival of religion soon followed. If you could be persuaded to imitate their example, perhaps the consequences would be similar. Will you not make the experiment, at least for one month! Will you not for one month, one little month, say NO, to every call of sinful pleasure, and devote yourselves to the pursuit of religion? Is this too much time to give to the salvation of your souls? Too much to give to him who gave you being; too much to give to that Saviour, who gave his blood for your redemption, and whose language is, My son, give me thine heart.

My dying, yet immortal hearers, will you not grant him this small favor? If you still hesitate, still feel undecided, let me entreat you when you go from this house to repair to your closets, and there lay open the Bible before you; bring to your minds the solemn hour of death, and the awful scenes beyond it, and with these scenes full in your view, survey your past lives, consider how you will wish they had been spent, when your last hour arrives; and then, with the eye of God upon you, and with your eye upon the judgment seat, decide whether you will follow Christ or your pleasures.

SERMON LXVI.

THE SINNER'S MISTAKES EXPOSED AND REPROVED.

These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. PSALM L. 21, 22.

THE doctrine of a judgment to come is no new doctrine. It is almost, if not quite, as old as creation. Though it is revealed with the greatest clearness in the New Testament, yet there are many intimations, and not a few explicit predictions of it in the Old. Indeed, it appears highly probable, that, under the ancient dispensation, mankind were favored with some predictions of this day, which are not recorded in the Scriptures; for St. Jude informs us, that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who was afterwards taken alive into heaven, prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds. To the same great day Moses seems to refer, when he represents God as saying, A fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn to the lowest hell, and consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. Another clear, and very explicit prediction of a future judgment, we have in the Psalm before us. Our God, says the Psalmist, shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round

about him. He shall call to the heaven from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people; and the heavens shall declare his righteousness, for God is judge himself. Having inspired his servant thus to foretell an approaching day of judgment, God himself takes up the subject, and after a most solemn address to his professing people, turns to sinners, charges them with various crimes, and concludes with the words of our text, These things thou hast done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. In this passage we have,

I. A description of the manner in which God treats impenitent sinners, during the present life. While they are going on in a course of sin, he sits as a watchful spectator of their conduct, but keeps silence: These things thou hast done, and I kept silence. There is, indeed, one sense in which he is not silent. He is continually speaking to them in his Word, inviting, counseling and warning them to repent and flee from the wrath to come; nor does he fail often to speak to them in the same manner, by the voice of conscience. But, as a Judge, he usually observes the most profound silence. Scarcely ever does he openly manifest his displeasure against sinful individuals, or visibly punish them for their sins in the present life; though he frequently sends his judgments on guilty nations. We are indeed told by the inspired writers, that his bow is bent to pierce, and his sword sharpened to cut off impenitent sinners, as soon as the day of grace shall have expired, and they shall have filled up the measure of their iniquities; but till that period arrives, the tokens of his anger are restrained, and nothing is done to show that he is more displeased with the wicked than with the good. The sun shines brightly over their heads, as it did upon Sodom an hour before its destruction; the rain of heaven descends upon them, and they are permitted to enjoy all the blessings of providence and all the means of grace. Young sinners are suffered to rejoice in their youth, and to walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes; and those that are farther advanced in life are suffered to pursue the world, and to glory in their wisdom, their riches and their strength; so that, in this life, there seems to be but one event to

the righteous and to the wicked, to him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. Thus while sinners are sinning and treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, God as a righteous Judge keeps silence; but though silent, he is not an indifferent or inactive witness of their conduct. All their sins, all their abused mercies, all the warnings they receive in vain, are carefully recorded by him in that book of remembrance which will be opened at the judgment day.

If it be asked, why God thus keeps silence; I answer, because this life is a season of trial and probation. Men are placed in this world, that they may show what is in their hearts, and thus discover their true characters. In order to this, it is necessary that they should be left in some manner to themselves; left at liberty to act as they please. It is evident that if the good were always openly rewarded, and the wicked visibly punished here; if the thunder always rolled, and the lightnings always flashed to blast the sinner at the very moment in which he sinned, this life would not be a state of trial. Men would be so much under the influence of a slavish fear, that they would not act as they pleased; and, consequently, would not make a discovery of their true character. It is evidently no time to discover whether a servant is faithful or unfaithful, while he feels that his master's eye is upon him. If we would know his true character, let his master withdraw for awhile, and leave him to himself, and it will then be seen whether he is an eye-servant or not.

Precisely in this manner God deals with mankind. He sets before them in the works of creation, sufficient evidence of his existence and perfections; he lays them under obligations to love and thank him by the blessings of his providence; he clearly prescribes their duty, and gives them directions for its performance, in his word; he places conscience in their breasts, as an overseer, and monitor; and then, wrapped up in his own invisibility, sits silent and unseen, to notice and record, their conduct. His eyes run through the earth, beholding the evil and the good; he is present in all the scenes of business and amusement; he comes with sinners to his temple on the Sabbath; goes with them to their habitations when they return; is with them when they lie down, and when they rise up; and follows their steps through the day; but however they may provoke him, still

keeps silence. Thus he is prepared to bring every secret thing into judgment, as he has told us he will do at the last day. Even now, this invisible witness is present. Even now he hears my words, and reads your thoughts; his adamantine pen is even now in motion to record them; and it will be found when he judges the secrets of men hereafter, that not one thought or feeling has escaped his notice.

II. We have in this passage the opinions which sinners form of God, in consequence of his thus keeping silence: Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself. We are not to understand the passage as asserting, that sinners suppose God in all respects to resemble themselves. They know that he is not like them, clothed with a body; that he is not mortal; that he far surpasses them in power, wisdom, and other natural perfections. But it is their opinions of his moral character, of his views and feelings with respect to themselves and their conduct, to which the assertion refers. In this respect every unawakened sinner supposes, or at least acts as if he supposed, that God is altogether such an one as himself. Feeling no immediate tokens of God's displeasure, he flatters himself that God is not displeased. Satisfied with his own character and conduct, he imagines that God is equally satisfied. Feeling little or no abhorrence of sin, he takes it for granted that it is not hateful in the sight of God, and that of course he will not punish it. Finding it easy to justify himself, and satisfy his own conscience, he fancies that it will be equally easy to satisfy God, and justify his conduct at his bar. But what most evidently shows that he thinks God to be such an one as himself, is the fact, that from what he should do, he infers what God will do. He says in his heart, I could not destroy so many millions as there are in the world, destitute of religion, and therefore God will not destroy them. I could not find it in my heart to punish any man with everlasting misery, and therefore God will punish none in that manner. I should save all men, were it in my power, and therefore God will save all, and me among the rest. Sometime or other, I shall be converted, if conversion be necessary, and if it be not, I am safe. That such are the thoughts and feelings of sinners is well known to all who converse much with them respecting religion; and in defiance of all God's declarations to the contrary, they will persist in supposing that

He will do as they should do in like circumstances. When hard pressed, their hearts, if not their lips avow: — I can never believe that God will make any of his creatures miserable forever. Now in reasoning in this manner they evidently take it for granted, that God is altogether such an one as themselves; that his views and feelings correspond with theirs, and that he will do nothing which they would not do, were they in his place. They forget that God has said, My ways are not yours: as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts. They forget that God is the moral Governor of the universe, and, as such, is no less sacredly bound to punish the wicked, than to reward the good. They forget that he has most solemnly declared that, though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished, and that he cannot break his word. They forget, that God is not man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent; that what he has said is as certain as if it were already done; and fancy that it is as easy for God as it is for themselves to say and unsay, to do and undo, and to modify and change his purposes.

III. We have in this passage an account of the measures which God will employ to convince sinners that he is not such an one as themselves: I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. This he will do as is evident from the context, at the judgment day. He intends, as an apostle informs us, that every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world made to stand guilty before him. To produce this effect, nothing more will be necessary than to bring into view the sins which men have committed, and the duties which they have neglected; or in the language of the text, set them in order. This, God here declares that he will do; and that he is perfectly able to do it, is evident from what has already been said respecting the silent, but particular notice which he takes of human conduct. But what, it may be asked, is implied by setting the sinner's offences in order before his eyes? I answer, it implies,

In the first place, giving the sinner a clear and full view of all the sins of his life, in thought, word and deed, in the order in which they were committed. Such a view no sinner has of himself in the present life. He is guilty of ten thousand, thousand sins, which he does not even suspect to be sins. Of his

sins of omission, which are by far the most numerous, he scarcely thinks at all. Blinded by self-love, and the deceitfulness of his own heart, he views his character in a favorable light, and calls many things virtues, which God will convince him were sins. Ignorant of the spirituality and extent of the divine law, he has no conception how frequently, how continually, he violates its precepts. Of the sins of his heart, he is almost entirely unconscious; though they are not only the most numerous, but perhaps the worst of which he is guilty. He does not consider that a wanton look is adultery, that covetousness is idolatry, and that hatred of his brother is murder in the sight of God. He does not consider that every waking moment, in which he does not love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself, he is breaking the two great commands on which hang all the law and the prophets. He does not consider that as often as he eats or drinks, merely to gratify himself, and not to glorify God, he is violating a most important gospel precept. He does not consider, that, during every day spent in unbelief, he has treated God as a liar, crucified Christ afresh, and grieved the Spirit of grace. He does not consider that to him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Nor does he think anything of the innumerable evil consequences which result from his conduct during his life, and which will continue to flow from it perhaps after his death; though he is accountable for them all. And as every sinner is thus guilty of innumerable sins of which he is scarcely conscious, so he very quickly forgets those sins which he knew to be such. The sins of each successive day efface the remembrance of the sins of the preceding day; the youth forgets the sins of his childhood; the man forgets the sins of his youth, and the grey-haired sinner forgets the sins of his manhood; hence the sinner never has any full view of his sins; and though he is every day increasing in guilt, and treasuring up wrath, he is not aware that he is more guilty now than he was formerly.

But at the day of judgment he will have a clear view of the whole; then all his sins will find him out, and God will set them in order before him, to overwhelm him with amazement, shame and despair. All the duties he has neglected, all the sins he has committed, all his vain, foolish thoughts, feelings and desires, all his idle words, all his hidden works of darkness, all

his wandering imaginations in the house of God, all the mischief which resulted from his example, all the unbelief, pride, wickedness and rottenness of his heart, will then be brought to his view at once, and he will, however reluctantly, be forced to behold them.

In the next place, setting the sinner's offences in order before him, implies giving him a view of all their aggravations. All the mercies he received, all the afflictions which were sent to rouse him, all the opportunities, privileges, warnings and means of grace with which he was favored; all the sermons which he heard, and all the secret checks which he experienced from his own conscience, and from the strivings of God's Spirit, will then be set before him, to shew that he sinned wilfully and knowingly, against light and against love, and that he is, therefore, without excuse. Thus it will appear that God would often have reclaimed him, but that he would not be reclaimed, and that he is consequently the author of his own ruin.

In the third place, setting his sins in order before him, implies giving him a full view of their dreadful malignity and criminality. Of this sinners see nothing in this world. They do not see what an infinitely great and glorious Being that God is against whom sin is committed. They do not see what an infinitely precious, lovely, and all-sufficient Saviour they are rejecting. They do not see the holiness, justice and goodness of the law. They do not see what a heaven they are forfeiting, nor into what a hell they are plunging themselves by sin. They do not realize how short is time in comparison with eternity, nor how worthless the body when compared with the soul. But at the judgment-day they will be made to see all these things. Then they will behold every object in its true light. They will then see what a being God is, and the sight will convince them that the least sin committed against him is an infinite evil and deserving of everlasting punishment. Then, too, they will see what a Saviour Christ is. He will then come, not in his own glory only, but in that of his Father and all his servants the holy angels; and the folly, the madness and wickedness of rejecting such a Saviour, will, therefore, appear to be infinitely great.

Then, too, time with its engagements will seem exceedingly

short and insignificant, for they will all be past; and eternity will appear long indeed, for it will be all to come. In a word, then, the nature and tendency of sin will be clearly seen. It will be seen that as one spark of fire, if placed in a favorable situation, and supplied with proper fuel, is sufficient to produce an universal conflagration, and destroy every thing that is destructible in the universe, so the tendency of the least sin is to produce universal disorder and misery, and destroy the whole created universe or turn it into hell. How terrible, how appalling, how overwhelming, then, must be the sight which will be presented to the sinner, when all his sins are set in order before him, with all their aggravations, all their malignity, and all their dreadful consequences! Suffice it to say, that the sight will blast him like lightning; he will feel utterly unable to support it, or to endure the abhorrent gaze of his offended God, and of holy beings, and will be eager to hide himself from it, and bury his shame, if possible, by plunging into the darkness of the bottomless pit.

IV. We learn from this passage what improvement careless sinners ought to make of these awfully alarming truths. They should be led by them to consideration: Now consider this, ye that forget God. It is owing to forgetfulness of God, and to the neglect of considering these important truths, that sinners live as they do. They consider not in their hearts, says Jehovah, that I remember all their wickedness. My friends, is not this the case with respect to some of you? Do not some of you forget God; forget his laws, and forget your obligations to obey them; forget that you have a Master and a Judge in heaven, who, while he keeps silence, notices and remembers all your sins; who will hereafter bring every secret thing into judgment, and set all your sins in order before you? If any such there be, you are the very persons whom God here addresses. He speaks to you as directly as if he called you by name. Thus saith the Lord God, consider your ways. Consider that I am a constant though invisible spectator of your conduct. Consider that for all these things I will bring thee into judgment. Consider how thou wilt feel, what shame, confusion and despair will overwhelm thee, when I shall set all thy sins in order before thy face, in presence of the assembled universe, and doom thee

to depart accursed into everlasting fire. Such, O forgetful, careless and impenitent sinner, is the language in which the Creator, thy Judge now addresses thee, and he also tells thee,

Lastly, what will be the consequences of neglecting this warning: Consider this, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. Lest the terrible threatening should be unnoticed or forgotten, if only once uttered, God, in different parts of his word, frequently repeats it. Speaking of sinners, he says, I will be to them as a lion and as a young lion; I, even I, will tear, and none shall rescue them. And again, I will be to them as a lion, as a leopard who watcheth for the prey will I observe them. I will meet them as a bear bereaved of her young, and will rend the caul of their hearts, and will devour them as a lion. My friends, what a terrible emphasis is there in these words. It is God, it is Jehovah, it is that very Being whom you fondly fancy to be altogether such an one as yourselves, who says this. I, he says, even I will do it; I who am omnipotent, and therefore can do it; I who am true to my word, and therefore will do it; I who am just, and therefore must do it. And if it is Jehovah the strong God, the mighty One, who threatens to do this, well may he add, that none shall rescue, that there will be none to deliver them. My friends, it is, indeed it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; of that God who is a consuming fire. Can thy heart, he says, endure, can thy hand be strong, in the day when I shall deal with thee? I, the Lord have spoken, and will do it. Yes, if you do not consider and repent, God will tear you in pieces as a lion. He will send death to tear your souls from your bodies; he will tear your hearts with unutterable anguish, he will give you up to be devoured forever by the gnawing tooth of that worm which never dies, and by the merciless jaws of the great tormentor who goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; and there will be none to deliver, no Saviour to save, to interpose, to plead for you. Even the wrath of the Lamb, who is now willing to save, will be hurled against you. Even the rock of salvation, on which you now refuse to build, will then fall upon you and grind you to powder. Will you not then consider these things, ye who now forget God? Will you still think him altogether such an one as yourselves, and believe your own fancies, rather than his declarations? O do not,

I beseech you, do not, be so mad. Do not my sheep, my flock, do not refuse to listen to the voice of your Shepherd, do not follow the dangerous path, where the bear waits to tear you in pieces. Rather flee to the great Shepherd. He who will then tear, now offers to save you, and place you where you will be safe and happy forever.

SERMON LXVII.

THE SLEEPER AWAKENED.

What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God; if so be God will think upon us, that we perish not. — JONAH I. 6.

IN the preceding verses of this chapter, we are informed, that God gave a commission to the prophet Jonah, to go unto Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and denounce heavy judgments against its inhabitants, on account of the sins, of which they were guilty. Important and honorable, however, as such a commission from the King of kings ought to have appeared in the eyes of Jonah, he was, for some reason or other, unwilling to undertake it. This unwillingness probably arose, either from a dread of the labors and fatigues which would attend the performance of his duty; from a reluctance to see the heathen enjoying those prophetic warnings and instructions, which had hitherto been exclusively confined to the Jews; or from an apprehension that the Ninevites would repent, and be received into favor; and thus he would not only be considered as a false prophet in foretelling their destruction, but the obstinate impenitency of his own countrymen in disregarding the multiplied warnings of their prophets, would be rendered more odious and inexcusable, by the ready submission and reformation of that idolatrous city. For these, or some other similar reasons, he resolved not to go to Nineveh, and supposing, in common with the rest of his countrymen, that the spirit of prophecy was

confined to the land of Israel, he hoped to escape from its inspiring influences, by flying into a foreign country. But, like all who endeavor to frustrate the designs, evade the commands, or flee from the presence of God, he found his hopes miserably disappointed. He, who maketh the winds his messengers, sent a storm to arrest the fugitive prophet, and bring him back to the path of duty. A mighty tempest arose in the sea, which entirely baffled the seamen's art, and threatened them with immediate shipwreck and death. But while the terrified mariners lightened the ship, and cried every man to his God for deliverance, Jonah, the cause of their distress, lay buried in sleep, ignorant of his danger, and insensible to the storm which roared around him. From this state of slothful security, he was roused to a sense of the horrors of his situation, by the pungent, alarming expostulation in our text: What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise and call upon thy God.

My friends, this address of the shipmaster to the slumbering prophet, is equally applicable to all those of you who are yet in your natural, unregenerate state; for your situation is far more dreadful and alarming than his. Like him you are exposed to the storm of divine wrath, which every moment pursues and threatens to overwhelm you; like him you are asleep and insensible of your danger. To illustrate the resemblance between your situation and his in these two particulars, and to urge you without delay to rouse from your slumbers and call upon God, that you perish not, is my present design.

I. Like the prophet you are exposed to the storm of divine wrath, which every moment pursues and threatens to overwhelm you.

This, my friends, is a truth, which, however painful it may be for us to declare, and for you to hear, is too important to be concealed, and too plainly taught in the word of God to be either evaded or denied. We are there told, that mankind are by nature children of wrath, having no hope, and without God in the world; that there is no peace to the wicked, but that God is angry with them every day; that his curse is in their house, and that he will rain upon them snares and fire, and a horrible tempest, which shall be the portion of their cup. We are told that they have been unmindful of the Rock that begat them, and forgotten the God of their salvation, and that therefore God

is provoked to jealousy and has kindled a fire in his anger which shall burn even to the lowest hell, where indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, will be rendered to every soul of man that doeth evil.

We are told, that those who will not hearken to the voice of the Lord their God to do all his commandments, shall be cursed in the city and in the field, cursed in their basket and store, cursed when they go out and when they come in. In a word, the wrath of him who is a consuming fire, and the avenging curse of his law, like a tempest fraught with lightnings and death, pursues the sinner through all his hiding places and refuges of lies, hangs even now suspended over his head, and only waits for permission from that mercy which he is abusing, to burst in thunder and sink him in endless despair. These, you will observe, are not the idle phantoms of a distracted brain; they are not the declarations of a fallible mortal, which may be despised with impunity. No, they are the awful declarations of God himself; they are truths which he has revealed for our warning and instruction; they are like so many peals of thunder from Mount Sinai, to drive us for refuge to Mount Zion; and wo be to that man by whom they are neglected, or treated with contempt; for God has assured us, that if any man, when he hears the words of this curse, shall bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imaginations of my own heart, to add one sin to another, then the Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses which are written in this book shall be upon him; and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. Do you ask, against whom are all these awful curses, woes, and denunciations levelled? My friends, if you are still in an unconverted state, they are levelled at you. It is you who are children of wrath; it is you who have provoked God to jealousy; it is you whom the curses of his law pursue; it is you with whom he is daily and hourly angry. Do you ask, why he is angry? I answer, he is angry to see rational, immortal, and accountable beings, spending twenty, forty, or sixty years in trifling and sin, serving divers idols, lusts and vanities, and living as if death were an eternal sleep. He is angry to see you forgetting your Maker in childhood, in youth, in manhood, making no returns for all his ben-

efits, casting off his fear and restraining prayer, and rebelling against him who has nourished and brought you up as children. He is angry to see you laying up treasures on earth and not in heaven, seeking every thing in preference to the one thing needful, loving the praise of men, more than the praise of God, and fearing those who can only kill the body, more than him who hath power to cast both soul and body into hell. He is angry to see that you disregard alike his threatenings and his promises, his judgments and his mercies, that you bury in the earth the talents he has given you, and bring forth no fruit to his glory, that you neglect his word, his Spirit, and his Son, and persist in impenitency and unbelief, notwithstanding all the means he employs for your conversion. He is angry to see you come before him as his people, and worship him with your lips, while your thoughts are perhaps wandering to the ends of the earth. He is angry to see you trusting in your own wisdom, strength, and righteousness, for salvation, instead of placing your dependence on Christ, the only name by which you can possibly be saved. These are sins of which every person, in an unconverted state, is guilty; and for these things God is angry, daily angry, greatly and justly angry, and unless his anger be speedily appeased, it will most certainly prove your destruction.

But perhaps some will be ready to ask, if God be in reality thus angry, why do we not feel the effects of his displeasure? If such a storm of wrath does indeed pursue us, why do we enjoy the calm and sunshine of prosperity? Why are we permitted to go on successfully enjoying life, health, property and friends? Surely this would not be the case, if our conduct were indeed displeasing to God. And have you then forgotten, that the prosperity of sinners destroys them, that they are not in this life plagued and troubled like other men, but their eyes often stand out with fatness, and they have all that heart can wish? Have you forgotten that the goodness and long suffering of God, is intended to lead you to repentance, and that those whom it does not lead to repent, are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath? Have you forgotten the rich man, who fared sumptuously every day, while pious Lazarus lay perishing for want, at his gate? or him, whose soul was required, at the moment in which he was rejoicing in the abundance of his wealth? Surely, my friends, if you have not forgotten these,

and many similar instances which experience, and the sacred writings afford, you cannot imagine that worldly prosperity is any proof, that God is not angry. Whatever therefore your external situation may be, if you are still in an unconverted state, God views you with holy anger and indignation; his wrath abides on you, and his curse pursues you, nor will it cease its pursuit, till you are reformed or destroyed. In a word, my friends, this is your situation. You are embarked on the dangerous voyage of life in weak, frail, shattered vessels. On every side you are surrounded by rocks and quicksands, which your utmost skill can neither discover nor avoid. The clouds of divine displeasure frown dark and dreadful over your heads, and whether the approaching storm will burst this year, this day, or this hour, God only knows.

If those of you, to whom these observations are addressed, have thought proper to listen with any degree of attention, you have doubtless heard them, in many instances, with perfect indifference, or consummate contempt. To you, these awful denunciations of vengeance, probably, appear to be nothing more than the dreams of superstition, the mere phantoms and chimeras of a disordered imagination; and to be credibly assured that some trifling accident or calamity was about to befal you, would occasion more alarm and uneasiness in your breasts, than all the woes and threatenings which the Scriptures contain. What is the reason, perhaps some of you will disdainfully ask, what is the reason we can see nothing of all these terrible evils which await us? why do we discover none of these impending dangers, why hear nothing of all these storms and tempests, which we are told every moment pursue, and threaten to overwhelm us? I answer, because you are, in a spiritual sense, asleep, like the prophet; and like him insensible of your danger. This was the second point of resemblance between your situation and his, which we proposed to consider, and to this we shall now attend.

II. You need not be informed, that the inspired writers employ various figurative expressions to describe the character and situation of impenitent sinners. Persons of this description, are represented sometimes as foolish, mad, or infatuated; sometimes as blind and senseless; sometimes as dead in trespasses and sins, and sometimes as slumbering or asleep. To show the

justice, beauty, and propriety of this last metaphorical expression, it would be easy to enumerate several particulars in which the state of unrenewed sinners resembles the situation of those who are asleep. Of these particulars, time will allow us at present to notice only the most striking.

1. Sleep is a state of insensibility. In many respects it resembles death. It entirely locks up the senses of those who are under its influence, so that they perceive nothing, and know nothing, of what is passing around them. Of their own situation, they are perfectly unconscious. It may be safe, or dangerous, or critical in itself, but to them it is still the same. The day may dawn, and the sun arise on others, but he who is asleep, perceives not his beams. It may be a season of hurry and business, and his labor may be wanted; but he knows nothing of it. Place a mirror before him; he sees not his own image. Describe to him the character of the sluggard, he hears you not. Urge him to rise without delay; address him in the most moving and pathetic manner; invite or command, entreat or menace him, ply him with the most powerful arguments, the strongest motives, the most awful threatenings, or the most magnificent promises. It is all in vain. The sound may strike upon his ears, but while he continues asleep, it makes no impression. Place him in the midst of a delightful garden, where the morning hymns of the feathered choirs combine with fragrant odors, beauteous flowers, and blushing fruits, to leave no sense ungratified. It gives him no pleasure. Surround his couch with enemies and dangers, present a dagger to his breast, or poison to his lips; place him in a forest infested with wild beasts, or on the crumbling brink of a cataract; still he sleeps securely and quietly as before. In a word, his family and friends may be perishing around him for want of his assistance; his house may be wrapt in flames and threaten every moment to bury him in its blazing ruins; or, like Jonah, he may be exposed to immediate shipwreck and death, and yet far from knowing or suspecting his danger, he may be amused and delighted with fancies and shadows; for,

2. Sleep is a state of dreams and delusions. The nobler powers of the soul are then at rest, and imagination, a lawless, irreclaimable servant, embraces the opportunity to range and revel uncontrolled. Touched by her magic wand, every thing

assumes a new and delusive appearance, and the bewildered sleeper forms strange, false and fantastic ideas of himself, his character, his situation and pursuits. The beggar dreams that he is heir to a throne, or possessor of immense wealth; the miserable wretch dreams that he is happy; the naked fancies that he is clothed; the hungry, that he is feasting; the thirsty, that he has found a refreshing spring; the ignorant, that he has become learned; the simple, that he has grown wise; and the criminal that he is innocent. While they are thus deluded with regard to themselves, they are equally deceived in other respects. Though entirely unaffected with the realities around them, whether pleasant or painful, yet they are much engaged by their imaginary pursuits, and are rendered by them very happy or miserable. One imagines that he is flying from some impending evil, and another that he is following some flying good, and these fancied evils and blessings continue, so long as they are buried in sleep, to have all the force of realities on their minds.

Now, my friends, how exactly does this representation suit the character and situation of the unawakened sinner. He is (1.) in a state of spiritual insensibility, a state which so much resembles moral death, that the word of God often describes him as actually dead. His spiritual senses are chained up under the power of that strong man armed who keeps his goods in peace, even the god of this world, who blinds the minds of those who perish, and works in all the children of disobedience. The sinner has ears, but he hears not; he has eyes, but he sees not; he has taste, but he relishes not, the things of God. He knows nothing of the dangers of his situation; he is unconscious of what is passing around him; he sees none of the awful realities of the future and eternal world. The Sun of righteousness has arisen on the earth; but the sinner sees not his light, he feels not his warmth. The word of God, like a polished mirror, reflects most perfectly the sinner's moral image, but he does not perceive it. Describe to him his own character, call upon him instantly to rise; tell him that life is the seed-time for eternity, that now is the accepted time and the day of salvation; that the night of death is fast approaching, and that he must be up and doing, or he will be miserable forever. He hears, as though he heard not. Set before him all the powerful motives and arguments which the word of God affords; reason, expos-

tulate, urge, command, threaten, beseech, and entreat him; it is still the same. Place him in the house of God, where the awakened Christian finds a foretaste of heaven in communion with Christ and his members; set before him the bowers of paradise, the songs of angels, the golden crowns, the tree of life, and the water of life; invite him to partake of the gospel feast, spread with all the dainties which infinite wisdom, love and power, could provide; nay, set forth Christ evidently crucified before him,—all affords him not the smallest satisfaction; all is heard with the most perfect indifference and insensibility. And though his family and friends may, perhaps, be in danger of perishing eternally, for want of a good example, and suitable instructions from him; though he is surrounded by innumerable enemies, the weakest of whom could in an instant cut short the thread of life; though God, who has hitherto restrained them, is angry and threatens him with ruin, and that he is himself suspended as it were, by a single thread over the gulf which has no bottom, yet he is still unmoved, still the same.

(2.) The state of the unawakened sinner resembles sleep because it is a state of dreams and delusions. Imagination, passion and appetite deceive him; and though he is entirely unaffected with the things of his everlasting peace, and almost ignorant of their very existence, yet he is wholly engaged and swallowed up by the dreams and vanities of the world. He considers them as realities, and pursues or avoids them accordingly; and at the very moment that he sleeps on the crumbling verge of the grave, and that the storm which has pursued him so long is about to burst and blast him forever, he may, perhaps, be dreaming that he has acquired a great estate, and has nothing to do but eat, drink, and be merry; or that he has arrived at the summit of power and applause, and is surrounded by crowds of flatterers and dependents. The drunkard dreams that he has grasped the cup of felicity; he drains it to the very dregs, and finds too late that it is poison. The infidel philosopher dreams that he is about to become as a god, knowing good and evil; but wakes and finds that he has been eating forbidden fruit. Thousands dream that they are pursued by some impending evil, such as poverty, contempt or pain, and in attempting to escape it, they fall into the hands of that God, who is a consuming fire. Others fancy that they are pursuing some fugitive

good, but in the midst of their pursuit, stumble and fall to rise no more. Thousands and millions, who are in reality poor, and miserable, and guilty, and vile, and weak, and foolish, and sinful, and wretched, dream that they are rich, and happy, and innocent, and strong, and wise, and holy; and thus they are evidently in the broad road to destruction, yet fancy that God is their friend, and heaven their portion. In short, the life of every unawakened sinner is nothing but a series of dreams, and follies, and divers vanities, in which realities have no place. That this is, and always has been, the case, is evident from the word of God, and present experience. The inhabitants of the old world dreamed of safety and security, eating and drinking, and planting and building, till the flood came and destroyed them; so also it was with the Sodomites, who thought that Lot only mocked, when he threatened them with fire from heaven. And so our Saviour informs us it will be at the end of the world. We are assured in passages too numerous to mention particularly, that mankind are blind to the danger which threatens them, that their feet stand in slippery places, in darkness; that when they promise themselves peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them; that madness is in their hearts, while they live, and that after that, they go to the dead. My friends, what a wretched, deplorable, and almost hopeless condition is yours, if you are still in an unconverted state. You are hastening, with a swift and increasing pace, to irreparable ruin; yet you know not your danger, and what renders your situation infinitely more dreadful is, that you do not wish to be told of it. The broad road in which you are walking, is so pleasant, and the society you there enjoy, so fascinating, that you cannot bear to give it up, nor to be told that it will lead you to destruction. You love darkness rather than light, and it is this which renders your situation in a human view, altogether hopeless. Did you see the storm which threatens you, there would be some hope that you might escape it. Were you even willing to have it pointed out to you, your case would not be altogether desperate. But since you neither see it, nor wish to see it, we see no hope for you, but in the free, sovereign, unmerited mercy of God. He has commanded us to cry aloud and not spare; and though our arguments and calls can of themselves avail nothing, yet we must obey the command whether

slumbering sinners will hear, or whether they forbear; and leave the event to him who sends us.

In entire dependence, therefore, on his grace, and with a faint hope that he may now awaken some of you to a sense of your perishing, deplorable situation, I address each unawakened sinner here present in the words of the text: What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise and call upon thy God. And, my friends, well may we ask what you mean, to sleep thus, when your souls are at stake, when such blackness, and darkness, and tempest hang over your heads, and when God himself is angry with you daily, even that God who holds you prisoners in the hollow of his hand; whose eye is ever upon you, who surrounds you on every side, and whose persevering goodness alone keeps you for a moment out of everlasting wo. And have you then any time to waste in sleep and security? Will you still say a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep? Will you still delay repentance and preparation for death, when you know not but death is even now at the door, and will, this night, require your soul? So long as you remain unreconciled to God, all his creation are at war with you, and wait only his permission to destroy you in an instant. You have, therefore, no security for a single moment, and we solemnly charge you, in the name of God, to rise without delay, and call upon him in the name of his Son, that you may not perish forever. Awake thou that sleepest, arise, call upon thy God, if so be thou perish not. If you do not believe the word of God, we must leave you to sleep till you are awakened by the last trump; but if you do acknowledge this word to be true, you cannot, without renouncing all claim to rationality, defer obedience a single hour. The madman who scatters firebrands arrows and death as in sport, or the criminal who jests and trifles under the gallows, are the wisest of philosophers, compared with those who sport with the wrath of God, and amuse themselves with trifles.

From those who are still in a state of slothful and dangerous security, we now turn to those whom God has been pleased to awaken. We would remind such, that though they will not again be permitted to sink into the same profound repose as before, yet there is great danger lest, while the bridegroom tarries, they should slumber and sleep. Let me, therefore, call on them to re-

member the often repeated injunction of our Lord to watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. And permit me also to ask you, my Christian friends, whether you are not sinking into a drowsy frame; have you not forgotten your first love? If so, I would call upon you, in the name of perishing neighbors, relations, children and friends; and say what mean ye, O sleepers, thus to sleep while we are perishing around you. Arise, call upon your God, if so be he will have mercy upon us that we perish not. My Christian friends, will you obey this affecting call? Will you not cry earnestly and unceasingly to God, to open their hearts to receive the truth? I am willing indeed to hope that you do not neglect this, but I beseech you to abound more and more. Your prayers will not, shall not, cannot be lost. They may not, indeed, be answered immediately, but they will be answered, and they will bring down abundant blessings on your neighbors, families and friends. Redeem the time, then, from every thing, for this important duty. Remember that you are not your own, but God's, and he has not sent you here to rest, but to labor in season and out of season. Think of him who spent whole nights in prayer with strong cryings unto him that was able to save him from death; and who wept over rebellious Jerusalem when he foresaw her doom. My friends, look at these perishing immortals before you. They are now, as you were once, in jeopardy. Have you no tears to shed for them, no prayers to send up in their behalf? Will you remain careless, and asleep, while multitudes of your fellow creatures are going down to everlasting death?

SERMON LXVIII.

JOY IN HEAVEN OVER REPENTING SINNERS.

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth. — Luke xv. 10.

Though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, yet, for our encouragement and consolation, he has revealed them to us by his Spirit in his word. He there sets open before us the door of heaven, and invites faith to enter in, survey her future inheritance, and contemplate the joys and employments of those happy beings, to a participation of whose felicity she is conducting us. Let us, my hearers, comply with this invitation. Let us look in at the open door, which the condescending goodness of our God has set before us; feast our eyes with a view of uncreated glories, and refresh our ears with the hallelujahs of the heavenly host. If we have that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and which enables its possessors to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, we shall see the eternal King bending forward on his awful throne, and contemplating some object in this lower world with looks of ineffable complacency and delight. We shall see the Son of God, standing with open arms and a countenance full of invitation, compassion and love; — we shall see all heaven in a transport of joy, and hear its high courts resounding with the songs and praises of its blessed inhabitants.

Is it asked, what occasions their joy? A sinner, perhaps some sinner in this assembly, has just repented. This is the object which God contemplates with complacency and delight; for to this man, says he, will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. This is he, whom the Son of God opens his arms to receive; for, whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. This is what fills heaven with new joy, and calls forth from angelic lips their loudest songs of praise; for he who came down from heaven has assured us that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. This declaration of our Saviour, naturally leads us to inqiure who rejoice, and why they rejoice on such an occasion.

I. Who rejoice?

In answer to this inquiry, I observe,

1. That God the Father rejoices over every sinner that repenteth.

That the infinite and ever blessed Jehovah, before whom all nations are as nothing and vanity, should rejoice in the repentance of a sinful worm of the dust, appears at first view, strange, and almost incredible. But however strange or incredible it may appear, it is evident, both from his declarations and his conduct, that such is the fact.

It is evident from his declarations. His word informs us, that when he saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil continually, it repented him that he had made man, and it grieved him at the heart. But if he was grieved at man's apostacy, he cannot but rejoice when any of our apostate race repent, and return to him and happiness. Agreeably, we find him most solemnly declaring, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live. After foretelling, by the mouth of his prophets, the repentance and return of his ancient people, who had forsaken him to worship idols, he says,—Then shalt thou be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God; for the Lord delighteth in thee and thy land shall be married; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. For behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and my people a joy, and I will

rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in my people. Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thine heart, O daughter of Jerusalem, for the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing. These striking declarations, addressed by Jehovah to his ancient people, are equally applicable to penitent sinners in every age, and undeniably prove that he rejoices in their conversion.

That he does so is farther evident from his actions. To glorify his grace in the salvation of sinners, has apparently been the great object of all his dispensations, from the fall of man till the present day. It would be easy to show, that for this purpose the world has been preserved, and the race of men continued. For this purpose the various revolutions, wars and commotions which stain the page of history have been overruled. But these are trifles. For this purpose God gave up his only begotten Son, and sent down the Holy Spirit from heaven; and for the same purpose he is still sending forth his ambassadors to beseech sinners in Christ's stead to be reconciled to himself. That he rejoices when they comply with the terms of reconciliation, is evident from the manner in which he receives them, as represented to us in the parable of the prodigal son. No sooner does he perceive them returning from the service and ways of sin, than he hastens to meet and welcome them; clothes them with the robe of his Son's righteousness; puts upon them the ring of his everlasting covenant; causes their feet to be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; feasts them with the bread and water of life, and calls upon all the inhabitants of heaven to rejoice with him, because his lost children are found.

2. The Son of God rejoices over every sinner that repenteth.

Were it necessary to prove the truth of this assertion, we might remind you, that whatsoever things the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. We might remind you, that in the history of our Saviour we read of his rejoicing but once; and his joy was then excited by reflections on the sovereign grace of his Father in bringing sinners to repentance, and in hiding the great truths of the gospel from the wise and prudent, while he revealed them to babes. But it is not necessary to prove the truth of this assertion. It is not necessary to prove,

that the friend of man, the compassionate Jesus, rejoices when sinners repent. His whole life was one continued proof of this. Is it possible that he who toiled, prayed, suffered and died for sinful men, should not rejoice in their conversion? Must not he who, once and again, wept at the sight of their miseries, and cheerfully poured out his blood for their salvation, even while they were his enemies, be almost ready to shed tears of joy over them, when by repentance they become his friends? Yes, he must rejoice, and he does rejoice over them with joy unspeakable, a joy which he only can feel, and of which he alone can conceive. This was a principal part of the joy set before him, for the sake of which he endured the cross and despised the shame; and it probably constitutes no inconsiderable part of the happiness which he now enjoys in heaven. Though there is no reason to doubt that the Holy Spirit participates in the joy of the Father and the Son, yet as the Scriptures are silent respecting it we shall only add,

3. That the blessed angels rejoice over every sinner that repenteth.

That these benevolent spirits take an interest in our affairs, and feel tenderly concerned for our welfare, is evident from various parts of revelation. When they came to bring the glad tidings of our Saviour's birth, they joyfully ascribed glory to God in the highest, that there was peace on earth and good will to men. They are also represented as styling themselves our brethren and fellow servants; as having a charge over God's people to keep them in all their ways, and as going forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation. From these and other passages we might have justly inferred, even if our Saviour had not assured us of the fact, that these happy beings rejoice over every sinner who repenteth.

II. Why do the inhabitants of heaven rejoice over repenting sinners?

So far as this inquiry respects the motives of Jehovah's conduct, it becomes us to answer it with reverence and humility, lest we should darken counsel by words without knowledge. It is however certain, that God does not rejoice in the repentance of sinners, because it can add any thing to his essential happiness or glory; for he is already infinitely glorious and happy, and so would continue though all the men on earth, and all the

angels in heaven should madly rush into hell. Is it any profit to the Almighty that thou art righteous, or is it any gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect? No, our goodness extendeth not to him, and when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants. Why then does God rejoice when we repent? He rejoices,

1. Because his eternal purposes of grace, and his engagements to his Son, are then fulfilled. We learn from the Scriptures, that all who repent, were chosen by him in Christ Jesus before the world began, and given to him as his people in the covenant of redemption. We also learn, that he has said to his Son, Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. He therefore rejoices to see them repent, as we rejoice when our promises are fulfilled, and our favorite purposes accomplished.

2. God rejoices when sinners repent, because bringing them to repentance is his own work. It is a consequence of the gift of his Son, and is effected by the power of his Spirit. The Scriptures inform us, that he rejoices in all his works, and with reason does he rejoice in them; for they are all very good. But if he rejoices in his other works, much more may he rejoice in this, since it is of all his works the greatest, the most glorious, and the most worthy of himself. In this work the image of Satan is effaced, and the image of God restored to an immortal soul. In this work, a child of wrath is transformed into an heir of glory. In this work, a smoking brand is plucked from eternal fires, and planted among the stars in the firmament of heaven, there to shine with increasing lustre forever and ever. And is not this a work worthy of God, a work in which God may with propriety rejoice?

3. God rejoices in the repentance of sinners, because it affords him an opportunity to exercise mercy and show his love to Christ, by pardoning them for his sake. Christ is his beloved Son in whom he is ever well pleased. He loves him as he loves himself, with an infinite love; a love which is as inconceivable by us, as his creative power and eternal duration. He loves him not only on account of the near relation and inseparable union which subsists between them, but for the perfect holiness and excellence of his character, and especially for the infinite benevolence which he displayed in undertaking and accomplishing the great work of man's redemption. As it is the

nature of love to manifest itself in acts of kindness toward the beloved object, God cannot but wish to display his love for Christ, and to show all intelligent beings how perfectly he is pleased with his character and conduct, as Mediator. The inexhaustible fountain of love to Christ, which fills his heart, is constantly seeking new channels in which it may flow out and display itself to creatures. As David asked, Is there yet alive any of the house of Saul to whom I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake? so we may conceive of God as asking, Is there yet any penitent sinner, to whom I may show kindness for the sake of Christ? And when such a sinner is found, God cannot but be pleased, because it affords him an opportunity to display his love for Christ, by bestowing pardon from respect to his atonement and intercession. The Scriptures also inform us, that the Lord delighteth in mercy. He must therefore be gratified when he has an opportunity to exercise it. But such an opportunity none but penitent sinners afford him; for those who continue impenitent, will not ask for mercy; they will not even accept it when offered; they almost consider the offer itself as an insult. When told that God is willing to forgive them for the sake of Christ, they practically reply, what have we done that needs forgiving? We have injured no one. We are not like others, extortioners, adulterers or unjust. We can be saved without forgiveness through Christ. Insult us not then with offers of pardon, as if we were criminals, but carry them to sinners, to profligates, who have need of mercy. It is needless to remark, that God cannot consistently forgive sinners while they possess this self-justifying temper. But when they exchange this temper for a contrite heart, and begin to cry, God be merciful to us sinners, he can with propriety gratify himself, and manifest his love to Christ, by exercising toward them that mercy which he delights to display.

4. God rejoices when sinners repent, because it gratifies him to see them escape from the tyranny, and from the consequences of sin. God is light; perfect holiness. God is love; pure benevolence. His holiness and his benevolence both prompt him to rejoice, when sinners escape from sin. Sin is that abominable thing which he hates. He hates it as an evil or malignant, and as a bitter, or destructive thing. It is indeed both. It is the plague, the leprosy, the death of intelligent creatures. It

infects and poisons all their faculties; plunges them into the lowest depths of guilt and wretchedness, and pollutes them with a stain, which all the waters of the ocean cannot wash away, which all the fires of hell cannot remove; from which nothing can cleanse them, but the blood of Christ. Such is the malignity of its nature, that could it gain admittance into the celestial regions, it would instantly transform angels to devils, and turn heaven into hell. That this is no exaggerated representation, melancholy experience but too clearly evinces. Already has sin transformed angels to devils; already has it converted this world from a paradise to a prison; from a habitation of immortals, to an Aceldama and a Golgotha, a place of skulls and a field of blood. Already has it poisoned not only our bodies, but our souls; it has brought death into the world and all our wo, and,

"in one hour,
Spoil'd six days' labor of a God."

Even now it stalks through our subjugated world with gigantic strides, spreading ruin and wretchedness around in ten thousand forms. Strife and discord, war and bloodshed, famine and pestilence, pain and sickness follow in its train; while death mounted on his pale horse, with the grave and hell follow in the rear. Such are the miseries which sin has introduced into this once happy world; such the evils which attend its progress here, notwithstanding the various restraints which are employed to check its career. Would we see these evils consummated, and learn the full extent of that wretchedness which sin tends to produce, we must follow it into the eternal world, descend into those regions where peace, where hope never comes; and there by the light of revelation behold sin tyrannizing over its wretched victims with uncontrollable fury; fanning the inextinguishable fire, and sharpening the tooth of the immortal worm. See angels and archangels, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, stripped of all their primeval glory and beauty, bound in eternal chains and burning with rage and malice against that Being, in whose presence they once rejoiced, and whose praises they once sung. See multitudes of the human race in unutterable agonies of anguish and despair cursing the gift, the giver and prolonger of their existence, and vainly

wishing for annihilation to put a period to their miseries. Follow them through the long, long ages of eternity, and see them sinking deeper and deeper in the bottomless abyss of ruin; perpetually blaspheming God because of their plagues, and receiving the punishment of these blasphemies in continual additions to their wretchedness. Such are the wages of sin; such the inevitable doom of the finally impenitent. From these depths of anguish and despair, look up to the mansions of the blessed, and see to what a height of glory and felicity the grace of God will raise every sinner that repenteth. See those who are thus favored in unutterable ecstacies of joy, love and praise, contemplating God face to face, reflecting his perfect image, shining with a splendor like that of their glorious Redeemer, filled with all the fulness of Deity, and bathing in those rivers of pleasure which flow forever at God's right hand. Follow them in their endless flight toward perfection. See them rapidly mounting from height to height, and darting onward with increasing swiftness and unwearied wing, toward that infinity which they will never reach. View this, and then say, whether infinite holiness and benevolence may not with propriety rejoice over every sinner that by repentance escapes the miseries and secures the felicity here so imperfectly described.

Why does the Son of God rejoice over every sinner that repenteth? I answer,

1. Why does a mother rejoice over her infant offspring? Is it not because she has given them existence and support? Why does a father rejoice over and press to his heart with new fondness the child, whom he has just rescued from the flames which consumed his habitation? Is it not because he has saved the object of his affections at the peril of his own life? So if it be asked, why Christ rejoices over repenting sinners, we reply, because he has given them spiritual life and nourishment; because he has redeemed them with his own precious blood from eternal wretchedness and despair. In the joy arising from other sources he participates with his Father and the Holy Spirit; but this is a cause of joy almost peculiar to himself. It was long since predicted respecting him, that he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; in other words, that he should see the effects of his sufferings in the repentance and salvation of sinners, and consider this as a sufficient recompense for all the

toils and sorrows through which he was called to pass. This prediction is daily fulfilling. Our Immanuel sees the fruit of the travail of his soul in every sinner that repenteth, and rejoices that his agonies were not endured in vain. There are, we trust, not a few in this assembly, over whom he has thus rejoiced. And O! with what affectionate emotions must he regard them. You can in some degree conceive, my friends, what your feelings would be toward a trembling dove, that should fly into your bosom for protection from the talons of a vulture. You can form some conception of the feelings with which David contemplated the helpless lamb, which he had rescued at the peril of his own life from the paw of the lion and the jaws of the bear. But who can conceive of the emotions, with which the Son of David must contemplate an immortal soul, drawn to his feet by the cords of love, whom he has rescued from the roaring lion at such an infinite expense? If we love, and prize and rejoice in any object in proportion to the labor, pain and expense which it has cost us to obtain it, how greatly must Christ love and prize and rejoice in every penitent sinner! His love and joy must be unutterable, inconceivable, infinite. Compared with his, even a mother's love must be cold. My friends, for once I rejoice that our Saviour's toils and sufferings were so great, since the greater they were, the greater must be his love for us and his joy in our conversion. And permit me to add, if he thus rejoices over one sinner that repenteth, what must be his joy, when all his people are collected out of every tongue and kindred and nation and people, and presented spotless before his Father's throne! What a full tide of felicity will pour in upon him, and how will his benevolent heart expand with unutterable delight, and swell almost to bursting, when contemplating the countless myriads of the redeemed, he says, Were it not for my sufferings, all these immortal beings would have been throughout eternity as miserable—and now they will be as happy, as God can make them. It is enough. I see of the travail of my soul and am satisfied. My friends, how great must that joy, that happiness be, which satisfies the benevolence of Christ.

2. The Son of God, with his Father and the Holy Spirit, rejoices when sinners repent, because they then begin to return his love, and acknowledge, with admiring gratitude, the wisdom

of his dispensations. You need not be told, that it is the very nature of love to wish for a return of affection. You can easily conceive why a fond mother rejoices when her infant child becomes capable of perceiving and returning her love. You can conceive why her joy increases, when the same child arrives at an age sufficient to see and acknowledge her wisdom and love, even in those corrections, which it once perhaps considered as indicating a want of affection. Should any of you be called to attend, for a series of years, some dear friend under mental derangement; and with unwearied love should spend many wearisome days and sleepless nights in promoting his comfort, and preserving him from self-destruction, while he regarded you as an enemy, considered your presence as irksome, and all your labors and precautions as needless and cruel, would you not rejoice, to see his reason returning; to see his eye once more sparkle with intelligence, and beam with affection; to hear him gratefully acknowledging and extolling your friendship, and to perceive in all his looks and actions that he returned it? And why may we not suppose that our compassionate Redeemer, and even our heavenly Father is capable of being affected in a similar way? They have loved all who repent with an everlasting love, a love stronger than death. But this love is never perceived or returned by the objects of it, while they continue impenitent! On the contrary, they are then enemies to God, and often consider his laws, his dispensations, and even the very means which he employs to bring them to himself, as destructive of their happiness. Similar feelings they exercise toward Christ. They see in him no form or comeliness, and when he comes to bless and save them, they are ready to say, like the man among the tombs, let us alone, what have we to do with thee? But when they repent, the scene is changed. They then come to themselves, and sit at the feet of Jesus in their right mind. The love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, the spirit of adoption is given them, they cry, Abba Father. The law and character of God appear to them perfectly excellent and lovely. The love of Christ constrains them to live not to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again; while the genuine language of their hearts is, Whom have we in heaven but thee? and there is none in the earth we desire besides thee. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within

us, bless his holy name; who forgiveth all our iniquities, who healeth all our diseases.

Why do the angels rejoice over every sinner that repenteth? They rejoice,

1. Because God rejoices. It is said respecting David, that whatsoever the king did pleased all the people. So whatever God does, pleases all the angelic hosts. His Spirit is the soul which guides and animates them all; their wills are swallowed up in his; and his interest, glory and happiness, are dearer to them than their own, or rather are considered by them as their own. Hence his feelings govern theirs. Is he displeased? they burn with holy zeal to execute his vengeance. Does he rejoice? they cannot but participate and echo back his joy. Like the servants in the parable, they rejoice with our heavenly Father when his lost children are found, and stand ready to assist in affording them a welcome reception. They rejoice,

2. Because it is their disposition to rejoice in the happiness of others. They literally love others as they do themselves; and since they know by experience the felicity which results from enjoying the favor of God, they cannot but wish that other creatures should possess it. They see in the fate of the fallen angels, the dreadful consequences of God's displeasure. They cannot therefore but wish that others should escape it. And since they know that repentance is the only way in which sinners of the human race can escape God's anger and secure his favor, they cannot but rejoice when any of them repent.

3. They rejoice when sinners repent, because God is glorified and his perfections are displayed in giving them repentance and remission of sins. The perfections of God are to be seen only in his works. His moral perfections are to be seen only, or at least principally, in his works of grace. There is more of God, more of his essential glory displayed in bringing one sinner to repentance, and forgiving his sins for the sake of Christ, than in all the wonders of creation. Agreeably, the psalmist informs us, that when the Lord shall build up Zion, that is, when he shall enlarge his church, the spiritual Zion, by bringing sinners into it, he shall appear in his glory; in other words, shall appear peculiarly glorious! He does so. In this work creatures may see, if I may so express it, the very heart of God. From this work angels themselves have probably learned more of God's

moral character, than they had ever been able to learn before. They knew before that God was wise and powerful, for they had seen him create a world. They knew that he was good, for he had made them perfectly holy and happy. They knew that he was just, for they had seen him cast down their own rebellious brethren from heaven to hell for their sins. But until they saw him give repentance and remission of sins through Christ, they did not know that he was merciful, and they did not know that he could pardon a sinner. And O! what an hour was that in heaven, when this great truth was first made known; when the first penitent was pardoned! Then a new song was put into the mouths of angels, and while with unutterable emotions of wonder, love and praise, they began to sing it, their voices swelled to a higher pitch, and they experienced joys unfelt before. O how did the joyful sounds, his mercy endureth for ever, spread from choir to choir, echo through the high arches of heaven, and thrill through every enraptured angelic breast; and how did they cry with one voice, Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace and good will to man.

Nor is the mercy of God the only perfection displayed in this work. There is more power and wisdom displayed in bringing a sinner to repentance, than in creating a world; and therefore as the sons of God sang together and shouted for joy, when God laid the foundations of the earth, so with still greater reason do they rejoice at beholding the wonders of the new creation in the souls of men. They delight to watch the beginnings of spiritual life in those who had long been dead in sin; to see light and order breaking in upon the natural darkness and confusion of the mind; to see the image of Satan disappearing and to trace the first lineaments of the image of God in the soul. With inexpressible satisfaction do they see the heart of stone transformed to flesh, notice the first penitential tears which flow from the sinner's eyes, and listen to the imperfectly formed petitions, the infant cries of the young child of grace. With the utmost readiness do they descend from their blissful abode to minister to the new-born heir of salvation, and surround him in joyful throngs, celebrating his birth-day with songs of praise. Behold, they cry, another trophy of sovereign, all-conquering grace. Behold another captive delivered by the Son of David, from the bondage of sin, another lamb of his flock rescued from

the paw of the lion and the jaws of the bear. See the principalities and powers of darkness foiled; see the strong man armed cast out; see the kingdom of Jesus extending, see the image of our God multiplied, see another voice tuned to join in the hallelujahs of the heavenly choirs. This, O our Creator, is thy work. Glory to God in the highest. This, O adorable Immanuel, is the effect of thy sufferings. Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessing and honor and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb forever.

INFERENCES. From this subject we infer, 1st, the incalculable worth of the human soul. To say that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, is to say all that can be said or imagined on this subject. Our Saviour himself, who spoke as never man spake, could say nothing more expressive of the worth of the soul than this; for in heaven the real value of this immortal spark of intelligence is known; and were it not a jewel of inestimable worth, never would its loss have grieved God at the heart; never would he have given his only Son to redeem it; never would he rejoice, and call on all the heavenly hosts to rejoice with him on its recovery. It can surely be no trifle which excites so deep an interest in the hearts of celestial beings. It can be no trifle, the acquisition of which increases the already ineffable joys of heaven. Yet such is the wretched infatuation of mankind, that they almost universally neglect this precious jewel, and barter it for bubbles, vanities and dreams, though a thousand worlds so bought, were bought too dear.

2. From this subject we infer, that the consequences of dying in an impenitent state will be unspeakably dreadful. You cannot but be sensible, my friends, that the inhabitants of heaven knew perfectly well, what these consequences will be; and did they not know them to be dreadful, unspeakably dreadful, would they thus rejoice over every sinner, who escapes them by repentance? If no punishment awaits impenitent sinners in a future state, or if their punishment be short in duration, or trifling in degree, would celestial beings thus rejoice to see sinners repent? When you see a mother transported with joy at the recovery of a sick child, do you not infer, that she considered the disease as very dangerous? So when we see the inhabitants of heaven rejoicing with new joys over a penitent sinner, must we not infer that they consider the punishment from which he has escaped as inconceivably dreadful?

3. From this subject we infer, that all who repent will certainly persevere and be saved. Suppose, for one moment, that such may fall and perish? Would God, would Christ, would angels then rejoice to see sinners repent? To see them placed in a situation where they had nothing to support them, but their own faithfulness to grace received? Would they rejoice to see penitent sinners in a situation from which perfect Adam fell, and which holy angels failed to keep? No, they would rather weep to see a weak, frail creature placed in a situation from which he would immediately fall, fall into a state if possible, more helpless than that from which Sovereign grace had raised him.

4. What an astonishing view does this subject give us of the benevolence of angels. Though they are perfectly happy, and though our character and conduct must to them appear inconceivably hateful, yet they forget themselves to think of us; they forget their own happiness to rejoice in ours. That we may more fully conceive of their benevolence, it is necessary to recollect, that they have the strongest possible temptations to envy us; and this they would do, did they in the smallest degree resemble mankind; for God passed by their fallen brethren, and provided no Saviour for them. Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham; and now they see us sinful worms of the dust, through Sovereign grace, not only plucked as brands from the fires, in which their fallen brethren are consumed, but even exalted above themselves in glory and felicity, being made the children of God, while they are only his servants. Yet instead of envying us on this account, or murmuring at God's distinguishing grace, they rejoice in our happiness. Yes, let us hear, and be confounded and hide our faces with shame in the dust; these benevolent beings rejoice to see sinful creatures of an inferior order exalted above themselves. Nay more, they cheerfully condescend to be our servants, even while we are clothed in sinful flesh; and to minister to us as heirs of salvation. This is the charity which seeketh not her own. This is to love one's neighbor as one's self, this is indeed the temper of the Son of God. My friends, are you not certain, that we naturally know nothing of such a temper? Are you not sensible, that such creatures as we are by nature, must be created anew, before we can imitate these benevolent beings? Are you not convinced that if this be the

temper of heaven, we must all be born again before we can see the kingdom of God?

5. From this subject we may learn whether we are prepared for heaven. We presume none will deny that preparation for heaven implies something of a heavenly temper. If then, we are thus prepared we have something of such a temper. Like the angels, we are pleased with God's sovereignty, and rejoice when sinners repent. We desire and pray that the kingdom of God may come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We are willing to do and suffer much to promote the salvation of sinners; and we are willing that others should do and suffer more, so as to outshine and eclipse ourselves. If this be our temper, we need no angel to come from heaven and tell us that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. There has already been joy over us in heaven as penitent sinners, and ere many years have elapsed, there will be fresh joy over us on our arrival there. But if we know nothing of this temper, if we are dissatisfied with the sovereign, distinguishing grace of God, if it gives us no pleasure, to hear of the effusions of the divine Spirit, to see sinners repenting and flocking to Christ; if like the proud elder brother, we feel envious when we behold penitent prodigals rejoicing in the truth; or like the Pharisees, are displeased to hear new-born souls crying, Hosannas to the Son of David; or if we are unwilling to spend and be spent in promoting the spread of the gospel, and the salvation of sinners—it is certain that we in no respect resemble the angels of God; we cannot share in their joys, or join in their songs; and unless our hearts should be renovated by divine grace, we shall never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Once more. Do the inhabitants of heaven rejoice when sinners repent? Then they rejoice in all the means which are employed to bring sinners to repentance. If this be the case, with what joyful emotions must they contemplate the prospect, which our world begins to present to their view. In this fallen, ruined world, once sunk in ignorance and wickedness, where Satan reigned with almost unlimited sway, they now see many societies formed, and a variety of means employed to diffuse the knowledge of Christ and reconcile men to God. The sound of the everlasting gospel has gone out into all the earth. The Scriptures of truth are flying, as it were, on an angel's wing

throughout the world; and soon, we trust, will every nation, and kindred, and people hear them speaking to them in their own tongue, and declaring the wonderful works of God. Already from the farthest parts of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. These songs have also been heard in heaven, and have there doubtless called forth new songs of praise to him, who is wise in counsel and wonderful in working, the real author of every thing amiable or excellent both in heaven and on earth. Over every institution for the spread of the gospel, which he has prompted his creatures to form, there has, we doubt not, been joy in heaven. Comparatively feeble as are the means, and circumscribed as are the operations of this Missionary Society, we doubt not that angels rejoiced in its formation. We doubt not that they are now looking down with mingled emotions of wonder, thankfulness, and love, to see those who are by nature children of wrath, enemies to God, and entirely destitute of concern for his glory or for the happiness of his creatures, engaged in devising means to bring their perishing fellow sinners to repentance. We are certain that every sinner who has been brought to repentance by the exertions of this Society, has occasioned joy in heaven, joy to God, to his Son, to his Spirit, and to angels. My fathers and brethren, what an encouraging thought is this? How should it animate us to reflect, that our feeble exertions produce joy in heaven; that heaven from which all our present blessings come, and in which all our future happiness is to be enjoyed. What more noble, or more glorious motive of action can we have in view, than to glorify God, produce joy in heaven, and rescue sinners from hell. Had we been made instrumental in doing this once only; had only one sinner been brought to repentance in consequence of the exertions of this Society, it would have been a rich, and abundant reward for all that has been done. But through divine grace we have reason to hope, that there has been not only one, but many. Let us then, bless God and take courage, remembering that he who converts a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins.

In view of these truths, my hearers, it surely cannot be necessary to solicit your assistance in carrying into effect the objects of this society. We do not solicit it. We will not ask you to bestow favors on Christ; but we tell you that Christ is ready to

bestow a favor on you. The rightful possessor and proprietor of heaven and earth; he, who though he was rich, for your sakes became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich, condescends to accept of your assistance to do that, which he could with infinite ease accomplish without it. He condescends to accept as a gift, a small portion of his own bounty, when he might justly demand the whole as a debt; and if a poor subject would consider it as a favor for his sovereign to accept some worthless gift at his hand, and reward him for it a thousand fold, how thankful should we be, that the King of kings, condescends to accept and reward our sinful services; and how joyfully should we seize every opportunity that is offered us of doing or suffering any thing for the sake of Christ.

But let us never forget, that if we would have our services acceptable, our hearts must go with them. Like the Macedonian Christians, we must first give our own selves to the Lord, presenting our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service. My friends, are there any of us who have neglected to do this? any over whom the inhabitants of heaven have never rejoiced? If so, it becomes us to repent without delay. To the immediate performance of this duty, my impenitent hearers, you are urged by every motive which is calculated to influence rational beings. You are urged to it by the plain, positive command of Jehovah. God now commandeth all men every where to repent. We lay this command across your path. You cannot proceed one step farther in a sinful course, without treading it under foot. You are urged to it by a regard to your own interest; for except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. You are urged to it by all the blessed angels, who are waiting with desire to rejoice in your conversion. Above all, you are most powerfully urged to it by the blessed Redeemer, whom you are under the strongest possible obligations to love and obey. He has done and suffered much for you. For you he has tasted death. For you, he cheerfully endured the scoffs and cruelties of men; the rage and malice of devils; and the overwhelmning weight of his Father's wrath. In return for all this, he requests of you one small favor. He merely requests you to repent and be happy. If you comply with this request, he will see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. He will consider the joy resulting from your repen-

tance, as a sufficient recompense for all that he has done and suffered in your behalf. O then, be persuaded, my friends, to comply with this request. Be persuaded to give joy to God, to his Son, and to the blessed angels, to make this day a festival in heaven by repenting. Even now your heavenly Father is waiting for your return, and the Redeemer stands ready with expanded arms to receive you. Even now the white robes and the ring are provided, and the fatted calf is made ready to feast returning prodigals. Even now angels and archangels are ready to pour forth their most joyful songs to celebrate your return. And will you then, by persisting in your impenitence, seal up their lips? Will you render all this preparation in vain; and slight the raiment and the banquet which God has provided? Will you go away impenitent, and thus practically say, there shall be no joy in heaven this day on our account. God shall not be glorified, Christ shall not be gratified, angels shall not rejoice if we can prevent it? If there be any present, of whose feelings and conduct this is the language, we solemnly but reluctantly declare unto you, in the name of Jehovah, that God and his Son shall be glorified, and there shall be joy over you in heaven, notwithstanding all your endeavors to prevent it. Never shall any of his creatures rob God of his glory; and if you will not consent that his grace shall be glorified in your salvation, he will be compelled to glorify his justice in your everlasting destruction. If you will not allow the inhabitants of heaven to rejoice in your repentance, their love of justice, truth and holiness, will constrain them to rejoice in your condemnation, and to sing alleluia, while the smoke of your torment ascendeth up forever and ever. Hear then, ye immortal spirits, ye probationers for eternity, ye heirs of heaven or hell, hear and obey, before it is too late, the warning, inviting voice which calls you to repent.

[Note. This sermon was preached before the Maine Missionary Society, June, 1812.]

SERMON LXIX.

THE OPPRESSED SOUL SEEKING DIVINE INTERPOSITION.

O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.—Isaiah xxxviii. 14.

These words compose part of a psalm, penned by Hezekiah, king of Judah, on his miraculous recovery from a dangerous disease. In the first part of this psalm, he describes the views and feelings which occupied his mind when he saw himself apparently on the brink of the grave. From this description, it appears that, though he had been one of the best kings with which God ever blessed a nation, he viewed his sins as great and numerous, and felt that he was, on account of them, justly exposed to the divine displeasure. Hence death appeared dreadful to him, and his dread of it was increased by the darkness which, at that time, before Christ had brought life and immortality to light, hung over a future state. Hence too he was assailed by fearful apprehensions of God's anger. I reckoned, says he, that as a lion he will crush me in pieces; he will cut me off with pining sickness; from day to night he will make an end of me. In consequence of these apprehensions he could neither look nor ask for help from God with confidence, as he had been accustomed to do. My eyes, he exclaims, fail upward; that is, I cannot look upward, cannot look to heaven for relief and consolation, as I formerly could. And when he endeavored to pray, he found that he offered nothing which deserved the

name of prayer; for unbelief and despondency prevailed. Like a crane or a swallow, says he, so did I chatter; that is, my prayers were little better than the complaints of a bird entangled in the snare of the fowler. Finally, he gave up all hope, and cried in bitterness of soul, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living. But to the righteous there ariseth light in the darkness. There did in this case. And as soon as it began to dawn, faith revived, and he cried, though still with a feeble voice, O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me; that is, be my help and deliverer, make my cause thine own, and do all that for me which thou seest to be necessary.

My hearers, if language was ever uttered by man, which all men ought to adopt; if a petition was ever presented by man, which all men ought to present before the mercy-seat, it is this. It is the very language which every soul does in effect adopt, when it applies to Jesus Christ in the exercise of faith. Would to God, I could persuade you all to adopt it from the heart. Then would your salvation be secure. I must make the attempt, though I must confess with very feeble hopes of success. With this view I shall endeavor to show,

I. That you all need some one to undertake for you; in other words, you need some one to make your cause his own, and to assist you in performing that work, on the performance of which your everlasting happiness depends. You are not indeed, like Hezekiah, on the bed of sickness, and apparently on the brink of the grave; but you soon will be there; and even before that time arrives, as well as then, and afterwards, you will need, greatly need some one to make your cause and your work his own. But, more particularly, you need some one to undertake,

1. To support and comfort you under the trials of life, and carry you safely through them. None of you know how numerous or how severe may be the trials which await you. This remark applies with particular force to all who have not far passed the meridian of life. If you live to old age, your afflictions, in all probability, will not be few. One thing at least is almost certain. If you live to that age, you will outlive nearly all the friends and companions of your youth; nearly all whose affection and society now make life pleasant. One after another, they will drop into the grave, and each successive loss will give your heart a pang. Some, who are now your friends,

will become your enemies, or at least their friendship for you will cool, and this may give you a pang still more severe. Some of you will lose children, perhaps all your children; others will see their children conduct in such a manner, that they will often wish, though in vain, that they had been written childless; others will meet with pecuniary losses and disappointments, and perhaps be constrained to leave their children almost or altogether unprovided for. Look back upon the history of this town for a few years, and you will not doubt that some who are now wealthy will be called in their old age to struggle with want, and die in poverty. And those who escape these trials must encounter the unavoidable evils which wait upon declining years. You must suffer pain and sickness, your senses and faculties will decline; you will be eclipsed by younger rivals; you will begin to feel that you are becoming less useful, and perhaps less respected; you will gradually lose your capacity for exertion, and for enjoyment; and every year, as it passes over your heads, will take something from your diminishing gratifications, and add something to your increasing infirmities. Youth, beauty, vivacity and vigor will be gone never to return; and the certainty that death is not far distant will, unless you are prepared for it, embitter your reflections, and prevent you from drawing comfort from within. Such is the common lot of man. But some of you will doubtless meet with afflictions still more severe,—and all are liable to meet with them,—afflictions, which will wring your hearts with agony, and tempt you to seek relief by forbidden means. And do you not then, need some one to undertake that he will support and comfort you under these trials, that he will make them all work together for your good, and finally bring you out purified and refined, as gold out of the furnace? When relatives, children, and friends shall die, or prove unkind, will you need no one to supply their place in your affections, and console you for their loss? When earthly possessions are taken away, will you need no one who can give you durable riches? When your body, or your mind, or both together, shall be diseased, will you need no kind physician to administer relief? Finally, when youth and sprightliness and vigor are gone, when heart and flesh fail, will you not need some one who can be the strength of your heart, and your portion forever. Yes, my hearers, my frail, dying hearers,

you do, indeed you do, need some one who can undertake to perform all these things for you.

2. You need some one who can undertake to be your guide through life. The Scriptures assure us, that it is not in man who walketh, to direct his own steps, and a very limited observation will convince us that this assertion is strictly true. We cannot look around us without seeing numberless instances, in which passion, prejudice and evil example lead men astray; and we must be very young indeed, or very much favored, if the same causes have not already led us into errors. Even if men were less under the influence of these pernicious counsellors than they are, yet as they cannot look into futurity, nor foresee the consequences of events, they would greatly need a guide who can do both. Such a guide is necessary even to our happiness in the present life. For one proof of this, look at the connections which men form. As the young come forward on the stage of life, they connect themselves, and can scarcely avoid connecting themselves in various ways with their fellow creatures. They choose associates, friends, partners in business, and perhaps partners for life. Much of their success and happiness in the world depends on their making a wise choice. Yet, as they cannot search the heart, they are exceedingly liable to be deceived in the character of those with whom they form connections, and to make a choice of which they will bitterly repent. They are especially liable to such mistakes, because they form most of their connections in early life, when they are rash, inexperienced, and unacquainted with mankind. And how fatal may such mistakes prove. We may choose friends who are vicious or impious, and who will corrupt our principles or our morals. We may choose partners in business, who will prove imprudent or dishonest, and plunge us into inextricable embarrassments. We may choose partners for life, whose temper and conduct will make life a burden. Even if we choose those whose characters are good, we may be deceived; for how many, whose morals are correct in youth, prove unkind or licentious or intemperate in after life. For proofs of this, look at the many unhappy families which are every where to be found. Look at the many wives, whose lives are embittered by husbands improvident, or passionate, or unfaithful, or intemperate. Once they appeared moral, amiable, affectionate; but now how

changed! Look too at the husbands whose peace is destroyed, whose home is disturbed by the temper or conduct of their partners; and who are driven to seek abroad that quiet which their own firesides do not afford. Now who can assure you, my young friends, that you will not form connections which will prove productive of similar evils? Who can assure you that persons, who are now apparently all that you can wish them to be, will not hereafter adopt vicious courses, and pierce your hearts through with many sorrows? Surely then you need a guide, a counsellor, who knows not only what is in man, but what every man will prove to be in future life. Without such a guide, you are every day liable to mistakes which will shed a disastrous influence on all your succeeding days.

But if you need such a guide as it respects this world, how much more as it respects the world to come. You do not, I presume, doubt, that your happiness hereafter will depend upon the path which you pursue here. Now consider a moment how many different paths present themselves to your choice, each one of which is declared by those who walk in it to be right. Consider how numerous, and how various are the religious opinions which prevail in the world, and in how different a manner different interpreters explain the Scriptures. Consider too, your own passions, inclinations and prejudices, and how powerful an influence they exert to lead you astray. Consider that, not your hearts only, but even your intellectual faculties are injuriously affected by sin, and that ten thousand temptations and evil examples will assail you. Now who is to guard you against all these evils, who is to teach you which of all the ways that open before you, is the only right way? Who is to guide you in that way, and prevent you from turning aside, when you have found it? Surely you need some infallible guide to do this; some one who can and will undertake to instruct and guide you in the way of peace. Not more does the helpless infant need a mother's care, than you need such a counsellor and guide. If any of you are still unconvinced of this truth, cast your eyes around upon your fellow travellers, and upon those who have preceded you in the journey of life. See how many of them have wandered and lost themselves. Hear the voice of inspiration assuring you, that comparatively few of them have found the straight and narrow way to life, and that

none of them ever found it without a guide. And are you wiser, can you hope to be more successful than all who have preceded you? Can you, alone and unguided, safely prosecute that journey which has proved fatal to so many thousands of your race?

3. Still more do you need some one who will undertake to afford you effectual assistance in subduing your spiritual enemies, the enemies which oppose your salvation. These enemies are numerous and powerful, artful and indefatigable; they have already enslaved and destroyed myriads of your fellow creatures, and no man ever overcame them without assistance. Of these enemies the first class is composed of your own sinful appetites, passions, and inclinations. If you know any thing of yourselves you know that these are adversaries to your salvation. You know that they are perpetually aiming to lead you astray, to carry you far from God, to withdraw your attention from spiritual and eternal objects, and to oppose at every step your return to duty. You know that, if a man follows where they lead, he will never become religious. And is it easy to avoid following where they lead? Is it easy to turn them, and make them point toward heaven? Is it easy to bring them into willing subjection to reason and revelation? If you ever made the attempt, you know it is not. You know it is like attempting to make water flow up an acclivity. And do you then need no one to assist you against these enemies? enemies who are seated and fortified in your own bosoms, who are a part of yourselves, who never sleep when you are awake, and who seem to be not only irritated but even strengthened by opposition? Can even the most moral young person before me be sure that these enemies will not render him the slave of open vice and immorality before he dies? Can he be sure that his appetites will not lead him to gluttony, intemperance or sensuality? Can he be sure that his passions will not betray him into other vices equally ruinous? No; and he who feels most confident of his own strength, only betrays his own self-ignorance, and is most likely to fall. Hundreds have died drunkards, debauchees, and even murderers, who once as little feared becoming such characters as any of you do now; and who, if their future conduct had been revealed to them, would have exclaimed with Hazael, What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?

And even if your appetites and passions should not lead to open vice, they may keep you in an irreligious state, and thus prevent your salvation.

Another of these enemies is the world. I use the term in its most extensive sense, as including all worldly objects and worldly men. It would require a volume to exhibit the various ways in which the world, used in this sense, opposes your salvation; I can now do little more than hint at them. I only ask, do not the pleasures and gratifications of the world allure you? Do not its honors and possessions entangle your affections? Do not its cares and concerns occupy your mind? Does not the dread of its contempt influence you? Does not the weight of its example, the torrent of its customs press on you with a force almost irresistible? May not our Saviour say of thousands in every age, as St. Paul said of Demas, They have forsaken me, having loved this present world? In a word, does not the world weigh almost as heavily upon the souls of men, as this globe itself would weigh upon their bodies, were they placed under its pressure? Say then, frail, sinful mortal, can you unassisted bear up against this pressure? Can you, single handed, withstand a world in arms, a world too, which has so strong a party in your own breasts, ever ready to betray you into its power? My friends, the man who supposes that he needs no assistance against this enemy, no mighty ally to undertake for him, never attempted to subdue it, but has ever been, and still is, its willing captive, its slave.

I might mention the tempter, him whom inspiration emphatically styles the adversary, as another enemy who opposes your salvation; but those whom I am addressing would probably believe nothing that I could say on this subject, even though I should enforce it by quotations from the Scriptures. I must however remind you of the inspired assertion, that those who would be soldiers of Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, must wrestle not only against flesh and blood, not only against their own sinful passions and the opposition of sinful men, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness, or the spirits of wickedness. And I must assure you that those, who were possessed by evil spirits in our Saviour's time, would as soon have freed themselves from these tyrants, as any man unassisted will free himself from those snares of the devil,

in which he takes and holds men captive at his will. But,

4. Most of all do you need some one who can and who will undertake to plead your cause in heaven, and effect a reconciliation between you and your justly offended God. You are all, my hearers, sinners. That you are so, at least in some degree, none of you will deny; and if you are sinners, even in the smallest degree, if you have ever committed one sin, you are condemned by that law, of which every sin is a transgression; your lives are forfeited, nor can you ever redeem the forfeiture. Though you should offer thousands of sacrifices, and ten thousands of rivers of oil; though you should give your first-born for your transgression, the fruit of your bodies for the sin of your souls, it would not avail. The sentence is pronounced, and the decree has gone forth, it is graven in the records of heaven, and has from thence been copied into the Bible, that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified, that in the sight of God no living man can be justified by any works or merits of his own. No; the honor of God's violated law must be secured, the claims of inflexible justice must be satisfied, a sufficient atonement must be made for sin, a mediator, who can negotiate peace between God and the sinner on proper terms must be found, an intercessor, an advocate must be provided, whose voice can be heard in heaven, who can approach the burning, unsullied throne of the Eternal to plead your cause; who can enforce his plea by considerations, the efficacy of which God will acknowledge; who can throw the broad shield of his merits over your unworthiness and your sins, and on the ground of those merits obtain your pardon, your acceptance, your salvation. Unless this can be done, unless such a mediator and intercessor will undertake for you, and make your cause his own, the cause must go against you, the sentence of condemnation already pronounced must stand irreversible. For yourselves you will be unable to plead. For yourselves you will not dare to plead, for every mouth shall be stopped, and the whole world stand guilty before God. O, then, how greatly do you need some one to undertake for you. When death approaches, with judgment and eternity just ready to burst upon you, how will you need one to whisper peace to your troubled conscience, and soothe you with assurances that he will make your cause his own. How much will you need one to support

and comfort and cheer you, when passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death. And when you shall stand naked and defenceless before the eye of your Judge, that eye from the terrors of which the heavens and the earth will flee affrighted; when the books shall be opened in which all your sins are recorded, and when your speechless tongue will have no word to utter in arrest of judgment, how much will you need one who can say with authority, Spare that sinner, I have undertaken to answer for him, I have made his cause my own.

Having thus shown that you all need some one to undertake for you, I would proceed to show,

II. That there is no one on earth or in heaven, who is both able and willing to undertake for you, except the Lord Jesus Christ. On this point the Scriptures are full and explicit. They assure us that he alone is the light of the world; that he is the Shepherd and Bishop of souls; that no man cometh to the Father but by him; that it is his grace which is sufficient for us; that he is the only Mediator between God and man, and that there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved. If you recollect the several things mentioned in this discourse, which he, who would undertake for us, must do, and the various offices which he must sustain, you will, I think, be convinced of this truth. You will be convinced that no one can possess both the ability and the disposition to undertake for you who is not, at once, God and man. He must be God or he cannot have the ability to do it. He must be omniscient and omnipresent, or how could he teach and guide with infallible skill millions of beings in different parts of the world, and at the same time manage their concerns in heaven? He must be Almighty, or how could he support and comfort these millions under all their various trials, make them victorious over all their enemies, and finally raise their bodies and souls to heaven. He must be infinite in goodness, condescension, patience and compassion, or he would never consent to undertake for creatures so unworthy and perverse as we are. And while it is necessary that he, who would undertake for us must possess these perfections of God, it is equally necessary that he should be man. No one could perform the work of a mediator between God and man in one person; nor could any other make satisfaction or atonement for our sins. He who would make atonement

for the sins of man, must perfectly obey the divine law and suffer its penalty. He must die, must shed his blood in our stead; for inspiration declares that, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. But as God, Christ could not die. As God, he had no blood to shed. It was therefore necessary that he should assume a nature which could die; a nature in which he could shed his blood; the nature of those beings who had sinned, and for whom atonement was to be made. Agreeably, we are told that, forasmuch as those for whom he died were flesh and blood, he also took part of the same, that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death. And while his human nature enabled him to die, his divinity gave worth and efficacy to his death, and qualified him to plead for his people efficaciously, as one who had authority. In him alone then, who was Immanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh, can we find one who is qualified to undertake for us. In him alone do we find one, who can do all that for our bodies and our souls, for time and eternity, which our welfare requires. And all this, I remark,

III. He will, he does undertake to do for every one who applies to him in the exercise of faith. To every one, however vile, sinful, guilty, and wretched, who in faith comes to him crying, Lord, I am oppressed, ruined, lost, undertake for me, his promise is sure. He never did refuse to hear the cry of such a suppliant. Him that cometh unto me, he says, I will in no wise cast out. To every one that thus comes to him, his language is, What wilt thou that I should do for thee? Wouldst thou be enlightened, instructed, guided? Follow me, and I will teach thee the good and the right way; I will guide thee into all truth, I will guide thee even unto death. Wouldst thou be supported and consoled under the various trials which await thee in life, and carried safely through them? Trust in me; and I will be thy comforter; I will even cause thee to glory in affliction, and to be joyful in tribulation. Wouldst thou be assisted to overcome thy sinful propensities, the world and the tempter? Rely on me and my grace shall be sufficient for thee and make thee more than conqueror. Wouldst thou have some one to care for thine eternal interests, and plead thy cause in heaven? Commit it to me, and I will plead it successfully, for I possess all power in heaven and on earth, and ever live to make intercession for

all who trust in me. Wouldst thou have thy soul saved with an everlasting salvation? Entrust it to my care, and I will undertake to save it, in defiance of all that can oppose. Cast all thy concerns, and care, and wants, upon me, and I will undertake to conduct and provide for them all; I will make with thee an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure.

And now, my hearers, are not your understandings at least convinced that you need some one to undertake for you? Are you not convinced that the Lord Jesus Christ alone can effectually undertake for you? And are you not convinced that, if you apply to him in the exercise of faith, he will undertake for you? Why will you not all then thus apply to him? Why not imitate St. Paul, and be enabled to say with him, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. What St. Paul had committed to Christ was his soul with all its concerns. And he knew that, in consequence of his committing it to Christ, Christ had undertaken to keep it, to save it: an undertaking which he would infallibly accomplish. On this all the apostle's hope of salvation was founded. And no man can found a scriptural hope of salvation on any other ground. If St. Paul, after all his sufferings and sacrifices and labors, would trust in nothing but this, surely we can safely trust in nothing else. O, then, be persuaded to cry from the heart in the language of our text, Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me. By all the scenes of sorrow, and trial and affliction through which you must pass; by all the dangerous mistakes, the fatal errors into which, as frail, fallible, short-sighted creatures you are liable to fall; by the number, malice, and strength of the enemies which oppose your salvation, and which must be overcome; by all the sin of which you have been guilty, and for which pardon must be obtained; by your dying agonies; by that dread hour in which you must appear before God in judgment, I conjure you to secure, without delay, a comforter, a guide, a protector, an intercessor, a Saviour, by applying believingly to Christ to undertake for you.

But perhaps some of you will say, we have already done this. We have long since believed in Christ for salvation, we rely upon the mercy of God through him; we have entrusted

all our spiritual and immortal interests to his care, and therefore we need feel no anxiety respecting them. We trust that we are safe, and that all is well. My hearers, these things are easily said, but thousands say them who never trusted in Christ, and for whom he never undertook. To such an one an apostle said, Thou sayest, I have faith; but wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? The faith which applies to Christ is a living faith, that is, a faith which is alive, and which makes its possessor alive in the service of God; a faith which, while it relies on Christ alone, is as active, and diligent, and watchful, and prayerful, and self-denying, as if it relied entirely on itself. Let those, whose pretended faith is not of this kind, remember that Christ saves his people, not simply by working for them, but by working in them, and thus disposing and enabling them to work out their own salvation. When he undertakes for a sinner, he undertakes not to save him without love, repentance, obedience, and a diligent, humble use of the means of grace, but he undertakes to make him perform all these duties. Be assured then that, if you live in the neglect of all these duties, Christ has not undertaken for you, and that, of course, you never truly applied to him. But apply to him in sincerity, and you will soon find a change in yourselves, which will prove that he has undertaken for you, that he has begun to work in your hearts, that he is guiding you into a knowledge of the truth, that he is interceding for you at the bar of God. Yes, truly believe in him, and you will soon have evidence that he has undertaken for you; for every one that believeth hath the witness in himself.

My hearers, will you not be persuaded to do this? Must we have the pain of seeing you struggling with afflictions, led astray by errors, subdued and carried captive by your spiritual enemies, and finally dying without hope, and appearing before God without an intercessor, when such a comforter, teacher, and helper, and intercessor as the Lord Jesus Christ, offers to undertake for you? If I can prevail with no others, let me, at least, hope to prevail with those of you who are afflicted, with those of you who feel ignorant, with those of you who feel burdened by conscious sinfulness and guilt, with those who are asking, What shall we do to be

saved? To all such, this ought to prove a word in season. O, let them receive it as such. Let them at once repair to the almighty and compassionate Saviour of sinners, and earnestly cry, Lord Jesus have mercy on us, for we are oppressed.

SERMON LXX.

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH THE SON.

Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.
1 John i. 3.

Great, my friends, as is the difference, between the church militant on earth, and that of the Church triumphant in heaven, the employments and enjoyments of their respective members nearly resemble each other, differing not in kind, but only in degree. Is it true that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived the glorious things, which God has prepared, in the world to come, for those who love him? It is also true, that even in this world, he reveals those things by his Spirit to believers. Do the saints above sing a new song, saying, Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive blessing, and glory, and honor, and power; for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood? The saints on earth unite with them in heart and voice to sing the same song, though in feebler strains. Do the blessed inhabitants of heaven rejoice over every sinner that repenteth? Christians on earth, according to their measure of grace, do the same. Do the spirits of just men made perfect resemble God, behold him face to face, and see him as he is? So just men on earth bear the image of God, behold him in his word and works, and endure as seeing him who is invisible. Do Christ's members above reside with him, behold his glory and rejoice in his presence? His members

on earth enjoy his presence, when they assemble in his name, and though with their senses they perceive him not, yet contemplating him with the eye of faith, they rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In a word, do the saints above enjoy a most intimate fellowship or communion with God and his Son? Saints on earth enjoy fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. To animate and assist his fellow disciples in seeking and enjoying this glorious privilege, was, we are told, the object of St. John in writing this epistle: The things which we have seen and heard, says he, declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

To prove that all true Christians enjoy a kind of fellowship or communion with God in Christ, to which other men are total strangers, and to show the nature of this communion, and in what it consists, is the object of the following discourse.

I. All true Christians enjoy a kind of fellowship or communion with God and Christ, to which mankind are, in their natural state, total strangers.

Though I doubt not, that there are many here present, who from their own happy experience have learned the truth of this assertion, yet there are probably still more who will ridicule and deny it. Those who are entirely unacquainted with experimental religion, and who deny the power of godliness, while they possess the form of it, will and must consider all pretences to communion with God as the effects of superstition and enthusiasm, the dreams and reveries of weak and deluded minds. When the profane scoffer, the cold hearted infidel, the formal hypocrite, and the self righteous moralist, hear the Christian conversing on these subjects, they are ever ready to exclaim, with a mixture of indignation and contempt, Thou art beside thyself; too much false religion has made thee mad! With the utmost justice and propriety, however, may the Christian deny the charge; for he is not mad, nor enthusiastic, nor superstitious; but speaks the words of truth and soberness. That communion with God, of which he speaks, and which constitutes his supreme felicity, is no fancied delusion, no enthusiastic dream, but a blessed reality; it is heaven begun in the soul, and is enjoyed in a greater or less degree by all without exception, who will ever be admitted into the kingdom of heaven.

This is evident from innumerable passages in the word of God. The high and holy One, who inhabits eternity, condescends, as he himself informs us, to dwell with those who are of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the heart of the contrite ones. I will not leave you comfortless, said our blessed Saviour to his disciples, I will come unto you; yet a little while and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me, and ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Abide in me, and I in you; for, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world? Jesus answered, if a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. Here you see, that in a spiritual sense every true Christian dwells in Christ, and Christ in him, and that he manifests or reveals himself to those who love him in such a manner, as he does not to the rest of the world; and that both he and the Father take up their abode in the hearts of all his true disciples. To the same purpose the apostle says, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Know ye not, says he to the Corinthians, that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. Because ye are children, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father; and the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God. All true believers are also represented as having already received the earnest and first fruits of the heavenly inheritance, as rejoicing in Christ with joy unspeakable and full of glory, as walking in the light of God's countenance, as beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and as enjoying the communion of the Holy Ghost. The inspired writers invariably use the strongest expressions which language affords, when they would show the intimate union which subsists between Christ and his church. He is the Shepherd, and they the sheep; he is the vine, and they are the branches; he is the Head, and they are his members; he is the Soul, and they are the body. It would

be easy to multiply passages to the same purpose, but surely, if there be any meaning in words, enough has been said to show that there is a most intimate union and communion between God and Christ and all real Christians, of which mankind, in their natural state, can form no conception. I proceed,

II. To show what this communion implies and in what it consists.

The original word, which is here rendered fellowship, and which is elsewhere rendered communion, signifies that reciprocal intercourse, or communion, which subsists between beings who are partakers of the same nature, whose moral character are similar, and who mutually know and esteem each other. is an observation no less just, than common, that like rejoices in like, and where there is no likeness, there can be no communion. Thus, for instance, there can be no communion between the inhabitants of the water and those of the air; for what is life to the one, is death to the other. There can be no communion, in the proper sense of the term, between mankind and the brutal world, because the former are endowed with reason, and the latter are not. It is the same in a less general sense, with respect to men of different ages, characters, and situations in life. The old cannot enjoy communion with the young in the pleasures of youth, nor the philosopher with the ignorant savage, in the pursuits of the chase. The blind can enjoy no fellowship with those who see, in the beauties of vision, nor the deaf, with those who hear, in the harmony of sounds. Unless persons resemble each other, therefore, in a greater or less degree, there can be no mutual communication of joys and sorrows between them; they cannot enter into each other's views and feelings, clearly understand each other's language, enjoy each other's society, or form an intimate, happy, and lasting union. But, on the other hand, when persons meet who resemble each other in temper, character, age, and situation, who love and hate the same things, and pursue and avoid the same objects, they readily unite, like drops of dew when brought into contact, and appear to compose but one soul in different bodies. Similitude, similarity of nature, of character and pursuits, must therefore be the basis of all true fellowship or communion. Hence it appears, that no creatures can enjoy communion with God and his Son, but those, who are partakers of his divine nature; who resemble him in their

moral character, and who love, hate and pursue those things which are respectively the objects of his love, hatred, and pursuit.

But in none of these particulars are mankind qualified to enjoy communion with God, while in their natural, sinful state. Once indeed, they were like God; but, at the fall, they lost his Spirit which originally dwelt in them; they lost his image and likeness, in which they were created; they lost all regard for his law, which was once written in their hearts; and became enemies to him by wicked works. Instead of pursuing his glory, they now regard only their own selfish interests; they have no desire to enjoy communion with him, nor any conception of what it implies; they do not even seek after God, but the language of their hearts is, Depart from us, for we desire not a knowledge of thy ways. In a word, their feelings, inclinations and pursuits, are diametrically opposite to the laws and character of a holy God. Now it is too evident to require proof, that such beings cannot enjoy communion with God and Christ, for, what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what communion hath light with darkness? or what concord hath Christ with Belial? As well might fire and frost form an alliance; as well might heaven and hell meet and mingle, as unrenewed sinners have communion with a holy God.

But very different is the case, with respect to the true disciples of Christ. They are reconciled to God through the blood of his Son; they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and have become new creatures. The law of God is written anew on their hearts, the lost image of God is in some measure restored to their souls, the Spirit of God returns to dwell in them, and thus again they become partakers of the divine nature. They are adopted into the number of God's children, and, according to the measure of grace given them, become holy as he is holy. They love what he loves, hate what he hates, and pursue what he pursues. Thus their natures and characters are made in some measure to resemble his, and a foundation is laid for the restoration of that ennobling, purifying, enrapturing communion, which constitutes the supreme felicity of all true believers, both in this world, and in that which is to come.

This communion consists in a mutual giving and receiving, which is constantly maintained between God and the renewed

soul; and which is carried on through the medium of the Lord Jesus Christ; who being Head over all things to his church, and uniting God and man in one person, is admirably qualified to discharge the office of mediator between God and his people. This is he, of whom Jacob's ladder was a type. By him all temporal and spiritual blessings descend from heaven to his people, and through him, all their prayers, and praises, and thanksgivings, come up for a memorial before God, being perfumed with the incense of his precious blood. In him all fulness dwells, and of this fulness all his friends receive, and grace for grace. As the sun is continually pouring forth a flood of light, and heat, and sweet attractive influences, on the planets, which harmoniously revolve around him, rejoice in his beams, and by reflection, return them again to their source, so the Sun of Righteousness, whose riches of grace and glory are unsearchable, and inexhaustible, is continually pouring forth enlightening, purifying, and life-giving influences, into the souls of believers, while they revolve around him, receive and rejoice in his beams, and return them back to him in grateful ascriptions of thanksgiving and praise. He gives himself, and all that he has to his people, engaging to be their God, their father, their friend and protector, and their exceeding great reward; and promising to love them, keep and guide them, even unto death; to watch over them as the apple of his eye, to gather them with his arm, and carry them in his bosom; to cause all things both in time and eternity to work together for their everlasting good. His people, on the other hand, humbly, gratefully and joyfully receive him, as their God and portion, and in return, give up themselves and all that they have to him, without reserve, as his people, engaging to love him, trust in him, worship him, to spend and be spent in promoting his cause, honor, and interest in the world. Various, and almost innumerable are the ways in which this communion with God is enjoyed by his people. We shall only mention some of the principal.

1. Christians enjoy communion with God in the works of creation. They contemplate the universe as a temple in which the most High sits enthroned; as a body, of which God is in a certain sense the soul; and as we love the bodies of our friends for the sake of the souls which inhabit them, as we are peculiarly pleased with the works of our friends, for the sake of the

hands which formed them, so Christians are ineffably pleased and delighted with the great work of creation, because it was formed and is filled by their Father and their God. Being possessed of that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and which brings invisible things to the mind with all the force of realities, they hear and see God on every side, and enjoy him in all the works of his hands. They see his power, wisdom and goodness, embodied and personified in the beauties and glories of creation, and feel that it is he, who

> "Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze."

They can

> "Look abroad through nature, to the range
> Of planets, suns, and adamantine spheres,
> Wheeling, unshaken, through the void immense,"

and triumphantly exclaim, 'Our Father made and preserves them all.'

In the sun they see an emblem of Christ, the Sun of righteousness; in the rainbow they behold a token of God's covenant love; in the showers and dews of heaven, they see an emblem of the refreshing influences of divine grace. In short, from the sun in the heavens, to the plant which rejoices in its influence, or the insect which is gladdened by its beams, there is nothing which is not full of instruction and consolation to the people of God; nothing which does not lead them to remember, love, and adore him. Even in the midst of conflicting elements, while the fair face of creation is deformed by storms and tempests, they can joyfully sing,

> "The God who rules on high,
> And thunders when he please,
> Who rides upon the stormy sky,
> And manages the seas;
> This awful God is ours, &c."

2. The Christian enjoys communion with God in all the dispensations of his providence. He not only acknowledges, but feels and rejoices, that the Lord reigns, that all events are at his disposal, and that not a hair can fall from his head, or a sparrow to the ground, without him. He does not rest in second causes, nor ascribe the events which befal him to luck and

chance, as mankind are naturally prone to do; but refers them at once to the great First Cause, and last end of all things. With the eye of faith, he looks up and beholds his God, his Father, and his friend, seated on the throne of the universe, working all things according to the counsel of his own will, and causing them to work together for his own glory and the good of his people. If he is chastised, he looks not at the rod, but at the hand that holds it, knows that in faithfulness and mercy he is afflicted, and that though his afflictions for the present are not joyous, they shall, in the end, produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and work out for him an eternal weight of glory. When he is favored with peace and prosperity, and his cup is made to overflow with blessings, he rests not in the streams, but follows them up to the fountain of goodness, from which they flow; and every temporal mercy which he receives, is rendered doubly sweet by the consideration that it comes from his Father's hand, and is a new proof of his Father's love. Thus he enjoys communion with God, in all the common mercies and events of life; and his heart, like a fertile field, which the Lord has blessed, brings forth in return fruit to the glory of God and eternal life, while its grateful language is, What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?

3. The Christian enjoys communion with God in his word, read and preached. To the sinner the word of God is a sealed book. He may read, and he may hear, but he cannot understand it; for its contents are in a great measure foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, and he has no spiritual faculties to discern them. He understands no more of the Bible, than a man born blind would understand of an elaborate treatise on light and colors; for the god of this world has blinded his eyes, and he is justly left under the power of this spiritual blindness, because he will not sincerely seek for the enlightening influences of the divine Spirit, nor embrace Christ as a prophet to instruct him.

From those who thus proudly trust to their own wisdom, God hides the great truths of his gospel, and reveals them to those, who, like babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby, and receive them with the meekness and docility of children. To such Christ opens the book and looses the seals. He also takes away the veil from their hearts, and

opens their eyes, that they may behold wondrous things out of his law; and thus enables them to receive his word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God. In this word he speaks to their very souls with the most astonishing majesty, authority, clearness, and energy; displays to their view the inexhaustible treasures of wisdom, and knowledge which it contains, leads them to the unfailing streams of joy and consolation which flow from his gracious promises, sets before them the glories and beauties of his own character and the wondrous plan of redeeming love. By his Spirit he applies it in such a manner to their hearts and consciences, as their several wants and circumstances may require; and thus comforts, animates, reproves, instructs, and counsels them, no less powerfully and effectually, than if he spake to them by a voice from heaven. He causes it to become bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, cordials to the faint, medicines to the sick, oil and wine to the wounded, consolations to the distressed, strength to the weak, rest to the weary, and armor both offensive and defensive, to the Christian warrior, and light to those who sit in darkness. In short, the Christian finds in the word of God something suited to every want, sorrow, and temptation, and therefore like David, he esteems it more than gold, yea than much fine gold, and considers it as sweeter to his taste than honey, or the honey comb.

Again, Christians enjoy communion with God and his Son in the public exercises of religious worship. Christ has said, that where only two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst of them; and this assurance his people find, by blessed experience, is still fulfilled. He meets with his people on these occasions to bless them, moves on their hearts by his Spirit, and thus causes them to burn with a holy flame of affection and desire; manifests himself unto them as he does not unto the world, and enables them, though they perceive him not with their bodily senses, so to contemplate him with the eye of faith, as to realize his presence with them, and to rejoice in him, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He also dwells in them all as one soul in different bodies, and thus draws and unites them together in the bond of peace and charity, and enables them to exercise that holy love for the brethren, that blessed union and oneness of spirit, which they ought ever to

feel as members of the same body. Then they, in some measure find that petition of our Saviour answered, which he offered up in his last prayer: I pray that all who may believe on me, may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; I in them, and they in me, that they may be made perfect in one. Thus they enjoy, at the same time, communion with each other, with their Saviour and their God.

Lastly, Christians enjoy communion with God and Christ, in in the exercise of private meditation, prayer and praise. As children, they have liberty of access to God at all times; and their prayers cannot fail of an answer, because Christ ever liveth at the right hand of God to spread out their cause and make intercession for them. In his name they may come to God with more freedom and confidence than they could come to any earthly friend, and pour forth all their sorrows into his bosom, spread all their difficulties, perplexities, trials, and temptations before him, and cast all their cares upon him, knowing that he careth for them. Wherever they are, or however employed; whether they are at home or abroad, in the house or by the way, in society or in solitude, in sickness or in health, in prosperity or adversity, they may still feel that God is with them; still enjoy the most delightful meditations on his character and perfections; still be employed in raising their hearts to him in prayer and praise. To assist and encourage them in the performance of these duties, God is sometimes pleased to pour out upon them a spirit of grace and supplications, to assist their infirmities, and make intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered. He sets forth Christ crucified before them, enables them with the eye of faith to look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn, and be in bitterness for their sins; to lie at the feet of their offended, but compassionate and long-suffering Saviour, and wash them with the tears of sincere contrition and repentance, while they loathe and abhor themselves for their pride, coldness, selfishness, and ingratitude, and repent as in dust and ashes.

Lest, however, they should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, God is pleased, at other times, to revive and strengthen their fainting spirits with the cordials of his love. He sends down the spirit of adoption into their hearts, whereby they are enabled to cry, Abba, Father; and to feel all those filial affec-

tions of love, joy, trust, hope, reverence, and dependence, which it is at once their duty and their happiness to exercise toward God. By the operation of the same Spirit, he shines into their minds, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, opens and applies to them his exceeding great and precious promises, makes them to know the great love wherewith he has loved them, and reveals to them those unutterable, inconceivable, and unheard-of things which he has prepared for those who love him. He also shines in upon their souls with the pure, dazzling, melting, overpowering beams of celestial mercy, grace, and love, displays to their enraptured view the glories and beauties of him, who is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, and gives them to know the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths, of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Thus he gives them as great foretastes of heaven, as their feeble natures can support, fills their souls to the very brim with all the fulness of God, and makes them understand that peace of God which passes all understanding.

On the other hand, the happy Christian in these bright, enraptured moments, while he is thus basking in the beams of celestial light and splendor; forgets the world, forgets himself, forgets his existence, and is wholly absorbed in the ravishing, the extatic contemplation of uncreated loveliness, glory, and beauty. He contemplates, he wonders, he admires, he loves, he adores. His whole soul goes forth in one intense flame of gratitude, admiration, love, and desire; and he longs to plunge himself into the boundless ocean of perfection, which opens to his view, and to be wholly swallowed up and lost in God. With an energy and activity unknown before, he roams and ranges through this ocean of perfection and glory, of power and wisdom, of truth and justice, of light and love, where he can find neither a bottom nor a shore. His soul dilates itself beyond its ordinary capacity, and expands to receive the flood of happiness which overwhelms it. All its desires for earthly happiness are dried up, and it no longer inquires, Who will show me any good? The scanty, thirst-producing streams of worldly delight, only increase the feverish desires of the soul; the noisy, tumultuous transports, and fancied raptures of the enthusiast, the visionary, and fanatic, which proceed merely

from the fervor of the passions and affections, soon die away, and leave no fruit behind; but the tide of joy which flows in upon the Christian, when he thus enjoys communion with God, is as full, as constant, as unfathomable, as the source from whence it flows. No language can do justice to his feelings, for his happiness is unutterable; but with an emphasis, a meaning, an expression, which God only could excite, and which none but God can comprehend, he exclaims, in broken accents, My Father, my God! whom have I in heaven but thee, and what can a miserable worm of the dust desire beside thee?

Thus, my friends, have I endeavored to describe the nature of that communion with God, which, in a greater or less degree, every true Christian enjoys. But how weak, how cold, how imperfect the description, how wretchedly inadequate is earthly language, to give a just representation of heavenly things! But you, my Christian friends, who have tasted the happiness of communion with God, you know what we would say, could language be found; and to your own experience we must refer you for clearer ideas on this interesting subject. Your own hearts must supply the deficiency.

Improvement. To some of you, my friends, I doubt not that the preceding observations must appear enthusiastic, foolish, and absurd. Nor is this matter of wonder or surprise; for the things of the Spirit have long been foolishness to natural men, and ever will be, till they are enlightened and taught of God. And unless you have been thus taught and enlightened, unless you have tasted, in some degree at least, the happiness of communion with God and his Son Jesus Christ, you are still strangers to true religion, still unprepared to be admitted into the heavenly mansions. In communion with God, most of the happiness of heaven will consist, and unless you are capable of enjoying this happiness here, you must be incapable of enjoying it hereafter. You may have a name to live, but you are really dead: you have the form of godliness, but you can know nothing of the power of it, until you experimentally learn what it is to have fellowship with those whose fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.

2. However foolish or enthusiastic the idea of such a kind of communion with God, as has now been described, may appear to some in this assembly, yet there are others who know, yea

infallibly know, that it is a blessed reality; and that it affords such a happiness as the world cannot give nor take away. To such we can say, Happy, yea, thrice happy is your lot. If you really enjoy communion with God, though but in the smallest degree, your names are written in heaven; a harp, a crown, and a mansion are prepared for you, and though at present, your communion with God is frequently interrupted by clouds and darkness, yet the time is fast approaching, when you shall behold with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, and be perfectly transformed into the same glorious image, and enjoy an indissoluble union, a most perfect, intimate, and uninterrupted fellowship with God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Seeing then you look for such things, give all diligence to maintain a daily and hourly intercourse with the heavenly world. Let your thoughts, your affections, and your conversation, be in heaven; draw near to God, and he will draw nigh to you, and cause his face to shine upon you, that you may be saved. Like Moses, live much upon the mount with God in prayer; and then like him, you will cause your light to shine before others, and adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour. We naturally copy the manners, learn the language, and imitate the example, of those with whom we associate, and if we have our fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, we shall gradually become conformed to their image, and the world will lose its power, offering its temptations, and spreading its snares in vain, for those who have been renewed in the spirit of their mind. Consider then, my friends, the infinite, astonishing condescension of Jehovah; consider what manner of love he has bestowed upon you, that you should be called the sons of God, and be admitted to friendship and communion with him; and let this incite you to make every possible exertion to glorify him by bringing forth fruit unto God. And let not those who are hungering and thirsting after communion with God, but who enjoy it only imperfectly or interruptedly, suddenly conclude that they know nothing of religion. The path of the just is as the rising light, faint and almost indistinguishable at first, but gradually advancing to the perfect day. Christ will not despise the day of small things. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Be of good courage therefore, wait on the Lord, and he shall strengthen thine heart.

Finally, whatever our character and pursuits may have hitherto been, let us all, from this moment, resolve to make God our chief good, and seek communion with him as our only happiness. Without this there is indeed no happiness, either in this world, or that which is to come. Without this, man is no better than the brutes that perish; for it is this alone which dignifies, exalts, and purifies his nature. This is the happiness for which he was made. This is the happiness which was prepared for him. O then, seek this happiness, and no longer exhibit the preposterous sight of rational, immortal beings cleaving to ashes, earth, and dust; chasing eagerly bubbles which elude their pursuit, and burst ere they can grasp them, while they neglect heavenly and divine things, and leave their never dying souls to perish.

SERMON LXXI.

THE BLAMELESS PAIR.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. — Luke i. 6.

The persons of whom the Holy Ghost has borne this honorable testimony are Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist. The character here ascribed to them, so excellent and desirable in itself, is especially deserving the regard and imitation of all who are united by conjugal ties. As this union is the source and basis of all the social relations, the character of those who "are no more twain but one flesh" must necessarily exert a powerful influence, not only over the domestic circle, but through all the ramifications of human society. It will be the object of this discourse,

I. To consider and illustrate the character described in the text; and,

II. To present some reasons why all who have entered the marriage state should endeavor to make it their own.

I. The first thing which demands attention in the character of this truly excellent and happy pair, is, that they were righteous before God. This, my hearers, is a great thing. It is, indeed, very easy to be righteous in our own estimation; nor is it very difficult to be righteous in the estimation of our fellow creatures; but it is by no means equally easy to be righteous in the estimation of God. He is constantly with us; he sees our

whole conduct; nay more, he reads our hearts. To be righteous before him, then, is to be really, inwardly, and uniformly righteous. It is to be the same persons in every situation, and on all occasions; the same at home, and abroad, in solitude and in society. But much less than this will suffice to make us righteous in the estimation of our fellow creatures. They are not always with us; they do not see the whole of our conduct; and of our hearts, our motives, they know almost nothing. Of course, they know very little of our real characters. How little, for instance, do the nearest neighbors really know of each other. How many characters, which now stand fair, would be blasted in a moment, were every part of their outward conduct only, laid open to public view? And how many husbands and wives, who are generally supposed to live happily together, would be found mutual tormentors, were they fully known to the world! How wretchedly then are those persons deceived, who flatter themselves that they are righteous before God, merely because their characters stand fair in the estimation of men. And yet how many flatter themselves in this manner. How many feel and act, as if they were to be judged by men only, and not by the heart-searching God;—as if that part of their conduct only, which is known to the world, was to be brought into judgment; and not every secret action, thought, and feeling.

My hearers, permit me to warn you against this ruinous delusion. Remember that, in order to be really righteous, you must be righteous before God. Remember, that no man, who would not be thought righteous by his fellow creatures, if his whole conduct and his whole heart were laid open to them, is righteous before God. Do you start at this assertion? A moment's reflection will convince you that it is strictly true. The whole conduct, and the whole heart of every man, is perfectly known to God. Now if God, knowing a man thus perfectly, judges him to be righteous, then his fellow creatures, did they know him as perfectly, would judge him to be righteous. Hence it follows, that every man is unrighteous, whom his fellow creatures would judge to be unrighteous, were they perfectly acquainted with his conduct and with his heart. Try yourselves by this rule. Would men think you righteous, did they know you as perfectly as God knows you? Then you are righteous. Would men think you unrighteous, did they know you thus

perfectly? Then you are unrighteous. It may, however, be necessary to remark, that in making these assertions, I proceed on the supposition, that men should judge of you by the rule of God's Word, the rule by which God himself judges of your character. With this qualification, the truth of these assertions must, I conceive, appear evident to all.

And is it not, to some of you at least, an alarming thought, that if men, did they know you perfectly, would think you unrighteous, then God certainly does think you so? And that he will treat you accordingly, unless you repent? If this thought does alarm any one, let me entreat him not to dismiss it hastily. Keep it in mind, make use of it to regulate your conduct, and to try your character; and when your heart and life become such, that an impartial jury of your fellow creatures, perfectly acquainted with both, and judging of them by the rules of God's Word, would pronounce you truly righteous, then, and not till then, may you venture to hope that you are righteous before God.

But the opinion of men, if they knew us perfectly, and judged us by the Word of God, would be according to truth; and, of course, deserve our regard. Yet while they know so little of us, as they actually do, their good opinion can prove nothing in our favor, except it be, that our outward conduct, so far as it comes under their notice, is correct. Still less can our own opinion that we are righteous prove us to be so. Agreeably, we find St. Paul saying, It is a very small thing with me to be judged of man's judgment, yea, I judge not mine own self; but he that judgeth me is the Lord. And is it not wonderful, my hearers, that every man who believes there is a God, does not, like the apostle, feel as if the opinions of other beings respecting him were of very little consequence?—that many, who acknowledge there is a God, should think so little of his judgment, and so much of the approbation of their fellow creatures? We do not feel and act thus in other similar cases. If we perform any work which requires the exertion of mental abilities, or of manual skill, we do not much desire or regard the applause of ignorant, incompetent judges. But we wish to know what judicious men, men of taste and information, think of it; and we value the approbation of one such man more than that of hundreds of inferior stamp. And were there one man in the

world, whose taste and judgment were infallible, and whose decision would fix forever the character of our work, we should prefer his approbation to that of all the world beside. Why, then, do we not thus supremely prize, and labor to obtain the approbation of God, the only being who really knows us; whose judgment is infallible, on whom our destiny depends, and whose sentence will stamp our characters with a mark, which can never, never be effaced! Thus did the pious pair, whose example we are contemplating. They studied to approve themselves to God; and he declared, in return, that they were righteous before him; and had the whole world known them as perfectly as he did, the whole world would have assented, with one voice, to the truth of this declaration.

Again: This pair walked in all God's commandments and ordinances blameless. I do not, however, mention this, nor do I conceive the inspired writer mentioned it, as something different or distinct from being righteous before God. It is rather mentioned as an effect and a proof of their being righteous. To be righteous, is to be conformed to the rule of right; and the only rule of right is the will of God, as expressed in his commandments and ordinances. These two words, though nearly synonymous, are not perfectly so. The commands of God are his moral precepts, or those precepts which are designed to regulate our temper and conduct on all occasions. By his ordinances are meant those religious rites and institutions, which he has directed us to observe. Repent, believe the gospel, be holy, —are commands; religious worship, baptism, and the Lord's supper, are ordinances. He that is righteous before God will observe both. In this respect many fail. Some pretend to obey God's commands, while they neglect his ordinances. Others visibly observe his ordinances, but neglect his commands. The truly righteous esteem all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and observe them, not on occasions only, when it suits their convenience, but habitually. Thus did the persons whose character we are considering. They walked in God's commandments and ordinances, as in a path which they never forsook. The term walk signifies a course of life. To walk in God's commandments and ordinances, is to have the heart and life constantly regulated by them. It is not to step occasionally into the path of duty, and then take many steps in a different

path; but it is to pursue this path with undeviating steadiness and perseverance, without turning aside either to the right hand or to the left. Nor was it a part only of God's commandments and ordinances that this pious pair observed; for we are told, that they walked in them all. They did not select such as were easy, or reputable, and neglect others. Nor did they observe those only, which they had little temptation to omit; but to use the language of the psalmist, they had respect to all God's commandments. Hence their characters and conduct were blameless, or irreproachable. Not that they were absolutely perfect. Some imperfection, doubtless, attended all their moral and religious performances; but there was nothing particularly blameable, no allowed insincerity or neglect. In the sight of men, their characters were spotless; and in the sight of God they possessed that simplicity and godly sincerity, which entitled them to the honorable appellation of Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile.

Such is the example here presented for the imitation of all, especially heads of families. But in order that the example should produce its full effect, it is necessary to show, more particularly, what is now, under the Christian dispensation, implied in walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blamelessly.

1. It implies the exercise of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. These are the two first and great commands of the gospel, on obeying which our obedience to all other commands, and our acceptable observance of all Christian ordinances depends. This was the sum of St. Paul's preaching; these were the first duties which our Saviour directed his disciples to press upon all their hearers; and which he himself inculcates upon all. When the Jews asked him, What shall we do, that we may work the work of God? his answer was, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. Until we begin to perform these duties, we cannot be righteous before God, nor walk in any of his commandments or ordinances; for inspiration hath declared, without faith it is impossible to please him.

2. Walking in all God's commandments and ordinances blamelessly, implies great diligence in seeking a knowledge of them. No man can regulate his conduct by a rule, with which he is unacquainted. No man can walk in all God's command-

ments and ordinances, unless he knows what they are; nor can any man know what they are, unless he is familiarly acquainted with the Scriptures. As well might a mariner find his way to a distant port, without ever looking to his chart or compass. And the commands and ordinances of God are so numerous, that without daily and long continued attention, we shall certainly forget or overlook some of them; shall never obtain such a clear, systematic view of our duty, as is necessary to its performance. That copy of the Old Testament, which Zacharias and Elizabeth possessed, was doubtless worn with frequent use. It must have been their daily counsellor and guide.

3. Walking in all God's commandments and ordinances blamelessly, implies a careful performance of all the duties which husbands and wives owe each other. These duties are summarily comprehended in the marriage covenant, in which the husband solemnly promises, before God and men, that he will love, provide for, and be faithful to his wife; and the wife, that she will obey, love, and be faithful to her husband. This covenant has the nature of an oath, and as such involves all who violate it in the guilt of perjury. The duties which they thus solemnly bind themselves to perform, are no more than God requires of them in his Word. He there commands husbands to love their wives, even as they love themselves, and wives to be subject in all things to their husbands. He commands them to make this union resemble that which subsists between Christ and his church. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as the church is subject to Christ. There must be but one will in a family, but every act of that one will must be prompted by love, love like that which Christ displays for his church. In no family are all God's commands obeyed, in which this love on the one part, and this submission on the other, are not found.

4. Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of God blamelessly, implies a careful performance, on the part of parents, of all the parental duties which he has enjoined. He requires us to give them a religious education, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; to teach them diligently his revealed will, speaking to them of it, in the house, and by the way, when we lie down and when we rise up; and to re-

strain them when they would pursue vicious courses. We have also reason to believe that he requires parents to dedicate their children to him in baptism. That they ought to be dedicated to God, and presented to Christ for his blessing, all Christians are agreed, though our Baptist brethren do not think them proper subjects of baptism. But our Saviour's command, Suffer little children to come unto me, or to be brought to me, and forbid them not,—certainly makes it the duty of every Christian parent to present his children to Christ, and to pray for his blessing upon them, whatever may be his opinion respecting infant baptism. Nor can Christ fail to be displeased with those parents, who, by neglecting to bring their children, do, in effect, forbid them to come. And no Christian parent, who believes infant baptism to be an ordinance of God, can pretend that he walks in all God's ordinances, while he neglects it. Indeed, while any of you, my professing hearers, neglect it, you are violating your own express covenant engagements.

5. Walking in all God's ordinances and commandments blamelessly, implies the maintaining of the worship of God in the family. It is acknowledged, that there is no command which, in so many words, says, worship God in your families, or, maintain family prayer. Yet that this is a duty incumbent on heads of families, is, perhaps, as clearly taught in the Scriptures, as if it were the subject of an express command. We have, for instance, the example of good men in favor of it. God expresses full confidence that Abraham would maintain religion in his family. Joshua's resolution was, As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. David, after the public exercises of religion were finished, returned to bless his household; that is, to unite with them in an act of worship; and our Saviour often prayed with his little family of disciples. Families that call not upon God's name are classed among the heathen, and it is intimated that God will pour out his fury upon them. Besides, we are commanded to pray always on all occasions, and in all circumstances; of course, in our families. And St. Peter exhorts husbands and wives to live together as heirs of the grace of life, that their prayers may not be hindered,—an expression which evidently refers to united prayers, and intimates that he thought it very important that such prayers should not be hindered; and that he took it for granted that Christian families

would offer such prayers. Besides, the reasonableness, the propriety, and the happy effects of family worship, show it to be a duty. It is reasonable and proper, for families have mercies in common to ask for, and they receive favors in common for which they should unite in expressing their gratitude. And the happy effects which result from a right performance of this duty, are innumerable and inestimable. It has a happy effect upon the head of the family himself. It tends to make him circumspect, to produce watchfulness over his temper and conduct through the day; for how can he indulge sin or give vent to angry passions in presence of the family, when he recollects that he is a priest in his own house; that he prayed with them in the morning; and that he will again be called to pray with them at night? He cannot but feel, that, if the rest of his conduct is not of a piece with this, his own children and servants will despise him for his inconsistency. This practice has also a most salutary influence upon the happiness of domestic life. If any unpleasant feelings arise between members of the same household, such feelings can scarcely outlive the return of the next season for family devotion. Affection and peace must return, when they next meet around the family altar, unless one or the other is a hypocrite. Thus dissensions are prevented, and domestic peace and harmony are perpetuated. I may add, that it always tends to produce, and often does produce, the most happy effects upon the children of the family. At least, it is certain that a much larger proportion of children are moral, and become pious, in families, where this duty is properly performed, than in those where it is wholly neglected, or only occasionally attended to.

6. Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly, implies a suitable concern for the present and future happiness of servants, apprentices and dependents. Their health must be regarded. More labor should not be exacted of them, than we would be willing should be exacted of our own children, were they placed in similar circumstances. Their rights must be held sacred. We are commanded to give unto our servants that which is equal and right, remembering that we have a Master in heaven. Their feelings must not be trifled with. If they are faulty, let them be told of their faults with mildness; but passionate, contemptuous language should never

be addressed to them. Ye masters, forbear threatening, is the command of Jehovah.

7. Walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly, implies a careful performance of all the duties which we owe our neighbors. Our Saviour has taught us to include in this class all our fellow men, to whom we have opportunity of doing good. He that is righteous before God will ever be a good neighbor. The present and future happiness of all his fellow creatures will be dear to him, and he will promote it as far as his ability extends. Of course, he will never knowingly injure them in their persons, reputation, or estate. And in receiving and returning their visits, he will be governed, not by the sinful or foolish customs, which the fashionable world has adopted, but by a regard to God's glory and their best good.

8. Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly, implies a proper use of the temporal good things which are entrusted to our care. Nothing should be wasted, for God will require an account of all. Nothing should be employed to gratify the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life; for property so employed is much worse than wasted. We must use the world as not abusing it, and employ every portion of our property in a manner which God will approve, and to the purpose for which it was given. He that wastes his possessions, wastes God's property, and the poor's patrimony; he that consumes them upon his lusts, gives them to swine.

Lastly; Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly, implies a sacred observance of the Sabbath, a diligent attendance on the public worship of God, and a commemoration of Christ at his table. All these things are God's ordinances, and, if we except baptism, they are perhaps the only ordinances which he has appointed under the Christian dispensation. Heads of families, who neglect either of them, cannot be said to walk in all God's ordinances blamelessly.

Having thus considered and illustrated the character brought to view in the text, I proceed, as was proposed,

II. To state some reasons, why all who have entered the marriage state should endeavor to make it their own. But in

this necessary? Can any of you, my hearers, need reasons or motives to persuade you to the acquisition of such a character? Does it not commend itself at once to the understanding, and to the conscience of every man who is possessed of either? If, however, any of you need such reasons, they can easily be assigned.

1. God approves, and requires you to possess, such a character. He commands you to be righteous before him. His language is, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. All the commandments and ordinances which have been mentioned are his. They are sanctioned by his authority; a neglect of them will be punished by his power; a performance of them will be rewarded by his grace. The curse of the Lord, we are told, is in the house of the wicked; but he loveth and blesseth the habitation of the righteous. And is it not reasonable that we should obey his commands? Is it not desirable to avert his curse from our dwellings, and to have his blessing in our habitations? Who, that believes there is a God, would not have his family one of the few faithful families, on which God looks with approbation? Who would not wish that the eye of God should discover in it nothing displeasing to him?

2. Consider how much it would promote your present happiness to possess such a character. Where can happiness be found on earth, if not in such a family as has now been described? Mutual affection and harmony, peace and contentment would dwell in it. All the gifts of Providence would be enjoyed with a double relish, because they would be received as the gifts of a Father, and be sanctified by his word and prayer. Almost every cause of domestic unhappiness would be excluded. There would be no room for anxiety, uneasiness, and alarm; for such a family could cheerfully trust in God to supply all its real wants, and to shield it from all real evils. Even if afflictions came, they would come as mercies, and deprived of their stings. In short, such a family would be of one heart and of one soul; that heart and that soul would be devoted to God, and God in return would devote himself to them. And O, how pleasant, how soothing, how refreshing, would it be to the husband, the father, to return at evening to such a house, after the labors and fatigues of the day, to be greeted with affectionate smiles, and to return them; to shut out the world with its follies and cares,

and to feel, while rejoicing in the circle of those whom he loved, that God was looking down upon them with approbation and delight; that an unseen Saviour was rejoicing in the midst of them, to see the happiness which he had purchased, and which his religion bestowed! How sweet, to close an evening thus pleasant, and a day spent in the service of God, by uniting around the family altar in an offering of prayer and praise to their great Benefactor, and then lie down to rest with that feeling of sincerity and safety, which filial confidence in heaven inspires! Some may, perhaps, choose to call this representation, religious romance; but it is sober reality; it is no more than has been actually enjoyed; and if we see few families in which it is realized, it is only because there are few, in which both heads of the family walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

3. Permit me to remind you how greatly such a family would honor God and adorn religion. It would, indeed, in such a world as this, be like one of those ever verdant islands, which rise amidst the wide ocean of Arabian sands, and whose constant verdure leads the weary and thirsty traveler to seek for the hidden spring which produces it. It is, perhaps, impossible for an insulated individual to exhibit all the beauty and excellence of Christianity; because much of it consists in the right performance of those relative duties, which he has no opportunity to perform. But in a religious family, a family where both husband and wife are evidently pious, religion may be displayed in all its parts, and in the fulness of its glory and beauty; and one such family will do more to recommend it, and to soften the prejudices of its enemies, than can be effected by the most powerful and persuasive sermon.

The subject is very far from being exhausted. Many more powerful arguments and motives in favor of imitating the character here recommended might easily be urged; but the unexpected length to which the preceding remarks have been extended, compels me to omit them, and to close with a short address by way of application.

Permit me to commence this address by asking each married pair in this assembly, whether their family is such as has now been described? whether they resemble the parents of John the Baptist? Are you both righteous before God? and do you walk

in all his ordinances and commands blameless? If not, whose fault is it? Is it the husband's? or the wife's? or the fault of both? In some families, doubtless both are in fault; neither is righteous. Alas, that there should be such families, and so many of them among us! Alas, that persons should ever enter the married state, so totally unqualified to discharge all its most important duties; that immortal souls should be committed to the care of those who know not their worth, and who will do nothing to effect their salvation! Is this the character of any fathers and mothers present? and if so, shall it continue such? Remember, ye who are in this state, especially ye who have just entered it, that, however happy you may now be, affliction will come, sickness will come, death will come; and what will you then do, ye who have made no provision for such events, ye who have no God to support and comfort you? Be assured, the time will arrive, even in the present life, when you will feel the need of religion; feel that everything besides is comparatively worthless. Remember, too, ye who now love and rejoice in each other, that you must meet in another world; and that the fate of each in that world will depend much upon the conduct of the other. If you now encourage each other in neglecting religion, you will then meet as the bitterest of enemies, and load each other with reproaches and execrations. Each one will then say, O, that we had never met! Had I not been connected with you, had I possessed a religious partner, I might now have been happy. But you tempted and encouraged me to live without God, and to neglect my Saviour; and now I must, in consequence, be miserable forever! On the contrary, should either of you now become truly religious, you may be instrumental in effecting the salvation of the other; and then with what joy will you both meet in heaven! O then, live together in such a manner, that you may hereafter meet with joy; live as it becomes two immortal beings traveling hand in hand to judgment and eternity. Live together in this world as heirs of the grace of life, and you shall live together in heaven, as happy participants of its bliss.

But there are probably other families in which the fault lies on one only of the partners. Perhaps, O husband, it is your fault, that both are not religious. You have a pious partner, one whom you cannot but acknowledge is pious. But you re-

fuse to unite with her in making your habitation a temple of God, the abode of religion, of peace and happiness. You do not, perhaps, oppose her; but you afford her no assistance in her journey to heaven. In this respect she is a widow. She is deprived of one of the greatest blessings which a wife has a right to expect from a husband; and must pursue her way solitary, alone. When she rejoices, she cannot impart to you her joys; when she is sad, she cannot make you understand the cause of her sadness, nor receive from you any consolation or relief. Nay more, you are the chief cause of her sorrows. She mourns with a heart almost broken, because she is compelled to leave you behind, to fear that you will perish forever; and the more kind you are in other respects, so much the more does her grief increase. Yet she, probably, does not express it, lest she should give offence, and be reproached for indulging needless apprehensions. And while you give all this pain to her, of what happiness do you deprive yourself; happiness here, and happiness hereafter! O, then, let it no longer be your fault, that religion is not enthroned, and adorned, and enjoyed in your families; but now, while the Spirit and the bride invite, come and taste of the water of life freely.

In other cases it is, perhaps, the fault of the wife; and if so, how great a fault! What hardness of heart, what inexcusable obstinacy, does it evince, to stand out not only against the authority of God, and the invitations of the Saviour, but the arguments, persuasions, and entreaties of her nearest earthly friend! What cruel unkindness, to plant thorns in the breast of him, who looks to you for his chief earthly consolation; to seal up his lips when he wishes to give vent to the feelings of his heart; to compel him to feel that, when he prays in his family, he prays alone; and to see that his labors for the salvation of his children are rendered almost fruitless for want of a partner to assist him. O, then, let no wife, no mother, in this assembly, be so unmindful of what she owes to her husband, her children, her Saviour, her God, as to continue in an irreligious state. And wherever either partner is pious, let both become so; and then shall the voice of joy and rejoicing be heard in your habitation, as it is in the tabernacles of the righteous.

Blessed be God, there are some such families among us,—families, in which, as we have reason to hope, both the husband

and wife resemble the parents of John the Baptist. Let those who are thus highly favored show their gratitude to God, by striving to become eminently pious. Let them quicken and assist each other in the good work, and be mutual helpers of each other's faith and joy. When you return to your habitations, consult together, and inquire, whether there is any commandment or ordinance of God, in which you are not both walking; any duty which you are neglecting; any thing in your families which is displeasing to Christ. If any thing of this kind is discovered, put it from you instantly, however dear. Thus you will each have increasing reason to bless God through eternity, for giving you a pious partner; and when you meet in heaven, you will love each other with pure and immortal affection, as instruments employed by God to fit each other for that world, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God.

SERMON LXXII.

CHILDREN TO BE EDUCATED FOR GOD.

Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.
Exodus ii. 9.

These words were addressed by Pharaoh's daughter to the mother of Moses. Of the circumstances which occasioned them, it can scarcely be necessary to inform you. You need not be told, that, soon after the birth of this future leader of Israel, his parents were compelled by the cruelty of the Egyptian king to expose him in an ark of bulrushes, on the banks of the Nile. In this situation he was found by the daughter of Pharaoh; and so powerfully did his infantile cries excite her compassion, that she determined not only to rescue him from a watery grave, but to adopt and educate him as her own. His sister Miriam, who at a distance, had watched his fate unseen, now came forward like a person entirely unacquainted with the circumstances of his exposure, and on hearing of the princess' determination, offered to procure a Hebrew woman, to take the care of him, until he should be of sufficient age to appear at her father's court. This offer being accepted, she immediately went and called the child's mother, to whose care he was committed by the princess in the words of our text,—Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.

In similar language, my friends, does God address parents. To every one, on whom he bestows the blessing of children, he

says in his word and by the voice of his Providence, Take this child and educate it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.

From this passage, therefore, we may take occasion to show,

I. What is implied in educating children for God;

II. The reward which he gives to those who perform this duty aright.

I. The first thing implied in educating children for God, is a realizing, heart-felt conviction that they are his property, his children, rather than ours; and that he commits them for a time to our care, merely for the purpose of education, as we place children under the care of human instructers for the same purpose. However carefully we may educate children, yet we cannot be said to educate them for God, unless we feel that they are his; for if we feel that they were ours exclusively, we shall and must educate them for ourselves and not for him. To know that they are his, is to feel a cordial operative conviction that he has a sovereign right to dispose of them as he pleases, and to take them from us whenever he thinks fit. That they are his, and that he possesses this right, is evident from innumerable passages in the inspired writings. We are there told that God is the former of our bodies, and the father of our spirits; that we are all his offspring, and that consequently we are not our own but his. We are also assured that, as the soul of the parent, so also the souls of the children are his; and God, once and again severely reproves and threatens the Jews, because they sacrificed his children in the fire, to Moloch. Yet plain and explicit as these passages are, how few parents appear to feel their force. How few appear to feel and act as if conscious that they and theirs were the absolute property of God; that they were merely the foster-parents of their children, and that, in all which they do for them, they are, or ought to be, acting for God. But it is evident that they must feel this before they can bring up their children for Him; for how can they educate their children for a being whose existence they do not realize, whose right to them they do not acknowledge, and whose character they do not love?

Nearly connected with this is a second thing implied in educating children for God,—namely, a cordial and solemn dedication or surrender of them to him, to be his forever. We have already shown that they are his property and not ours; and by

dedicating them to him, we mean nothing more than an explicit acknowledgment of this truth; or an acknowledgment that we consider them as entirely his; and that we unreservedly surrender them to him for time and eternity. This, my friends, is a reasonable service. The apostle beseeches Christians by the tender mercies of God, to present themselves as living sacrifices to him, holy and acceptable, and to glorify God in their bodies and spirits which are his. But the same considerations which render it right and reasonable that we should dedicate ourselves to God, render it equally right and reasonable, that to him we should also dedicate our children. If we refuse to give them to God, how can we be said to educate them for him?

In the third place, if we would educate children for God, we must do all that we do for them from right motives. Almost the only motive which the Scriptures allow to be right, is a regard for the glory of God, and a disinterested desire to promote it; and they consider nothing as really done for God, which does not flow from this source. Without this, however exemplary we may be, we do but bring forth fruit to ourselves, and are no better than empty vines. We must, therefore, be governed by this motive in the education of our children, if we would educate them for God, and not for ourselves. In all our cares, labors and sufferings for them, a regard to the divine glory must be the main spring which moves us. If we act merely from parental affection, we act from no higher principle than the irrational animals around us, since many of them evidently appear to love their offspring no less ardently, and to be no less ready to encounter dangers, toils, and sufferings, to promote their happiness, than we are to promote the welfare of ours. But if parental affection can be sanctified by the grace of God, and parental duties hallowed by a wish to promote his glory, then we rise above the irrational world, to our proper station, and may be said to educate our children for God; and here, my friends, we may observe that true religion, when it prevails in the heart, sanctifies every thing, renders even the most common actions of life acceptable to God, and gives them a dignity and importance which, of themselves, they by no means deserve. What, for instance, can be more common or trifling, than the daily reception of food for the support of the body? Yet even this may be done, and ought to be done, to the glory of God; and when

this is the case, instead of a trifling, unimportant action, it becomes an important religious duty; Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. Thus the care and education of children, however trifling it may be thought by some, ought to be attended to from a regard to the divine glory; and when this is done, it becomes an important part of true religion.

In the fourth place, if we would educate our children for God, we must educate them for his service. The three preceding particulars which we have mentioned, refer principally to ourselves and our motives; but this has more immediate relation to our children themselves. With a view to show with all possible clearness what we mean by educating our children for the service of God, permit me to make the following supposition. Suppose that any of you had a young and numerous family, for which you felt yourselves unable to provide. Suppose, farther, that some benevolent, rich and powerful monarch should condescendingly offer to support them and yourselves, during your lives, and at your death to adopt your children as his own, and raise them to the highest honors and employments in his kingdom, provided that they should be found on examination, any way qualified for his service. Suppose also, that he furnished you with the clearest and fullest instructions respecting the qualifications of every kind which he should require of them, and offered you every necessary assistance, to enable you to instruct and qualify them aright.

Now it is evident, that if you should think proper to embrace his offers, you would educate your children entirely for his service; this would be your sole object respecting them; to this every thing else would be made to give place, and you would feel, and endeavor to make them feel, that every thing which did not tend, either directly or indirectly, to prepare them for the examination through which they must pass, was of no use or consequence to them, however important or pleasant it might be in itself. In order to qualify yourselves for the right instruction of your children, you would diligently study the directions given you, and ascertain as nearly as possible, the qualifications which would be necessary to prepare your children for the honors and employments designed for them. In the next place, as soon as your children were capable of understanding you, you would inform them of every thing relative to their situation and

prospects. You would tell them that you were poor, and unable to make provision for their future support; that you must soon die and leave them friendless, destitute and forlorn; and that they would then indispensably need some kind and powerful friend to provide for and protect them. When they began to feel their need of such a friend, you would proceed to tell them of the condescending offers which the king had made, to adopt and provide for them as his own; of the qualifications which his service required, and of the assistance which he was ready to give them in acquiring these qualifications. You would tell them of his power, majesty, riches and goodness; of all the favors he had bestowed on you, of the great importance of securing his favor, and of the dangerous consequences of losing it. You would early begin to teach them the language of the country for which they were destined, and the laws, customs, and dispositions of its inhabitants; you would frequently remind them of the honors and employments before them, and of the folly of degrading themselves by frivolous pursuits, trifling amusements, and unworthy conduct; you would carefully guard against their associating with such companions as would tend to render their taste, their disposition, their conversation and deportment unsuitable to the exalted situation for which they were preparing. You would frequently seek for them the promised assistance of the king; warn them of the fatal effects of indolence and delay, and press them in every possible way, and by every motive which you could conceive of, to persevering diligence and active exertion. In a word, you would so conduct and converse with your children, as most clearly to show them that you considered their preparation for the examination through which they were to pass, as the great object of their lives, the one thing and the only thing really needful; and so to turn their thoughts, desires, words and actions into one channel, and direct them to this one end. You would be careful never to say or do any thing, which should lead them to think of any other friend or protector than the one whom you had chosen for them; of any other kind of honor or happiness than that which would result from his favor; or of any disgrace or misery comparable to the loss of it. Such, in brief, is the manner in which you would probably conduct in the circumstances we have supposed.

My friends, this supposition is not very far from the truth; and you may easily learn from it what is implied in educating your children for God. Like the parents mentioned above, you are in a spiritual sense poor, unable to provide for the happiness of your children in this world, and much more so in the next. God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, condescendingly offers to adopt them into his own family, cause all things to work together for their good, and make them heirs of a heavenly inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, provided they are properly qualified to serve and enjoy him. He has also, in his Word, given you the fullest and clearest instruction, respecting the qualifications, which he requires in his servants, and offers you the influence of his Spirit, to impart these qualifications to your children, and assist you in educating them aright. Now if you think proper to accept these offers, and educate your children for the service of God, or to be his servants, you will conduct in a manner very similar to that described above.

In the first place, in order to qualify yourselves for instructing and preparing your children for God's service, you diligently study his Word, to ascertain what he requires of them, and frequently pray for the assistance of his Spirit, both for them and yourselves. In the next place, as soon as they arrive at a suitable age, which is much earlier than is generally supposed, you will begin to tell them of your own inability to preserve them from misery, and render them happy either in this world or the next; of their indispensable need of some other friend and protector, of the gracious offers and invitations of their heavenly Father, of the infinite importance of securing his favor, and the inconceivably dreadful consequences of incurring his displeasure. You will also early begin to teach them the language of heaven, the dispositions, employments and enjoyments of its inhabitants, and the qualifications which are necessary to prepare them for it. You will tell them that God is able and willing to impart these qualifications to all who come to him in the name of Christ; that he has already conferred on them ten thousand favors; that he is the greatest, wisest, and best of beings, and that his Son Jesus Christ is the friend of children, and the Saviour of sinners. You will diligently caution them against all those sinful tempers and practices which are inconsistent with the favor of

God, labor to form them to his image, and prevent them so far as possible, from associating with companions, who might poison their principles, corrupt their morals or weaken their sense of the infinite importance of religion. In a word, you will carefully guard against saying or doing any thing which may, either directly or indirectly, lead them to consider religion as an object of secondary importance; on the contrary you will constantly labor to impress upon their minds a conviction, that you consider religion as the great business of life; the favor of God, as the only proper object of pursuit, and the enjoyment of him hereafter, as the only happiness; while every thing else is comparatively of no consequence, however important it may otherwise be.

Such, my friends, in brief, is the manner in which we must educate children, if we would educate them for the service of God; and the reasonableness of this, we presume no one will deny. No one would think of qualifying a child for a physician, without giving him some knowledge of diseases and their remedies; or for a counsellor without putting him upon the study of the law; or for a divine, without making him acquainted with theology. Equally necessary is it, if we would educate children for God, thus to attempt to qualify them for his service. And this, we may farther observe, implies three things. It implies,

1. That we pay more attention to the soul than the body. We do not mean that the body is to be neglected; but the soul must be considered as the superior part, and the body merely as its servant. In this respect multitudes of parents fail. They are extremly attentive to the bodies of their children, their health, their beauty, the elegance of their form, and the gracefulness of their deportment; but seem entirely to forget that they have a soul, a mind, a heart, that deserves attention. If the slightest illness affects their children, they are alarmed; but they feel neither concern nor anxiety on account of the diseases of their minds. They would be unspeakably distressed should their children be distorted or deformed, and would use every possible means to correct or remove the deformity; but their minds may be deformed, and their tempers distorted by a thousand evil passions, without giving them any disturbance. They would be extremely mortified to see their children awkward, rude and unpolished in their behavior to their fellow-creatures;

but seem to think it of no consequence with how much indecent rudeness and impiety, they treat their Creator. But surely this is not educating children for God. If mankind indeed were mere animals, devoid of reason, such a mode of education would be proper for them; but surely there ought to be some difference between the education of rational and irrational beings.

2. Educating children for the service of God implies, that we pay more attention to the heart or disposition, than to the mind. You will not surely suspect me of thinking that the mind, or, in other words, our rational faculties, should be neglected; or that the cultivation of it is not of very great importance. We only mean to assert that it is of far less importance than the cultivation of the heart. This, few, if any, will deny; for it is evident that, though our minds should be cultivated in the highest possible degree, and stored with every kind of human literature and science; yet if our hearts are neglected, if our passions, appetites and dispositions continue depraved, we can neither feel nor communicate happiness; but shall only be wretched ourselves, and occasion unhappiness to others, even in this world, much more in the world to come. It is notorious that many of the individuals, whose agency has been productive of the greatest mischief both in the moral and political world, were persons whose mental powers had been carefully cultivated, while their tempers and dispositions were neglected. On the contrary, the most ignorant person, if his heart be right, will be happy himself, both here and hereafter; and may be the means of communicating much happiness and doing much good to others; though not so much, we allow, as he might accomplish with an educated mind. It is therefore evident, that although both are important, yet the cultivation of the heart is more so than that of the understanding. It is highly desirable that our children should possess both the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove; but if they cannot have both, the latter is certainly to be preferred.

But this many parents appear to forget. They are sufficiently attentive to the minds of their children, and spare no pains or expense, to give them the best education in their power to bestow. Every kind of knowledge, and every accomplishment, whether useful or not, which is fashionable, must be acquired by them. But meanwhile their hearts and dispositions are, in a

great measure, or entirely, neglected. No means are employed to teach them the most important of all sciences, the knowledge of themselves, of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ, whom to know aright is life eternal. On the contrary, they are suffered to grow up, almost as perfect strangers to the very first principles of the oracles of God, as if there were no such book, or as if they were inhabitants of a heathen country. Surely, my brethren, these things ought not so to be. This cannot be educating children for God.

3. Educating children for the service of God implies, that we educate them for eternity, rather than for time; for a future world, rather than for this. You need not be told, my friends, that a different education is necessary to prepare us for different situations. For instance, if a parent designs one of his children for the navy, another for the counting house, a third for the bar, and a fourth for the desk, he will give them in some respects a different education; an education suited to their respective destined employments. So he who educates his children for this world, will, in many respects, educate them very differently from one who educates them for the next. The first will confine his views to the present life, and be anxious to teach his children only those things which are necessary to qualify them for acquiring riches, or honors, or applauses here. But the other will extend his views to eternity, and be principally, though not entirely concerned, to give his children that knowledge which will be useful to them beyond the grave. Here, again, multitudes fail. How few parents, my friends, educate their children in such a manner as would lead a stranger to conclude that they believed in God, or a future state; that they viewed their children as immortal beings, in a state of probation for eternity, and candidates for everlasting happiness or misery. He would see many anxious for the success of their children here, rising early, and late taking rest, and eating the bread of carefulness, to promote their temporal welfare; while no anxiety is manifested respecting the destiny of their undying souls.

Thus, my friends, have we endeavored to give you a concise view of what is implied in educating children for God. Let it be observed, in addition, that all this must be done in such a manner, as to convince your children, that you are sincere, that you are in earnest, that the promotion of their spiritual and

eternal welfare is the great, the absorbing concern of your souls. We proceed now, as was proposed,

II. To consider the reward which God usually bestows on those who thus educate their children for him. Though God is the Creator and sovereign Lord of all things, and might therefore, with the most perfect justice, have required us to obey all his commands without any compensation, yet he has been graciously pleased to attach a reward to the performance of every duty, and of this among the rest. This reward consists,

1. In the pleasure which attends every attempt to educate children for God. However strong parental affection may be, it is rarely, if ever, sufficient to render the various cares, anxieties, and duties which attend a numerous family, delightful or even pleasant. There is reason to believe, that, in many instances, these cares and troubles are productive of fretfulness, impatience, and discontent; and not only embitter the lives, but sour the tempers of parents. Even Christian parents, who do not recollect that they are, or ought to be, educating their children for God, are prone to murmur at the frequent interruption which they meet with in the hours set apart for devotion, and the little time which the cares of their families allow them, for reading, meditation and prayer. But did they realize that they are encountering all these cares and troubles for God, that they are educating his children, and that whatever they do or suffer for them, if performed from right motives, will be considered and rewarded as done for him, how greatly would it lessen their sorrows, and alleviate the cares and perplexities attending a family. How easy would it be to spend wearisome days, and sleepless nights, for their children, could they feel that they are acting and suffering for God; and that he looks on, and approves their conduct. This alone, were there no other, would be a sufficient reward to the Christian for bringing up his children for God.

2. Another part of the reward which God bestows on those who educate their children for him, is the happiness which they enjoy, when they see their labors crowned with success. This happiness will usually, if not always, be enjoyed by those who educate their children in the manner above described, and seek with proper earnestness and perseverance, the blessing of God to render their exertions effectual. I am warranted to make

this assertion by the authority of Scripture. We are there expressly assured, that if we train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old, he will not depart from it. In addition to this, God's language to every believing parent, to every child of Abraham is, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee. These passages are abundantly sufficient to warrant a belief, that God will save, at least, some of the seed of every believer, who, like Abraham, teaches and commands his children and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord; for were it true, that God does not promise to be a God to all the children of such parents, yet he does promise that he will be a God to some of them; and we dare challenge any person to produce a single instance, in which all the offspring of believing parents who educate their children for God, in the manner above described, died without giving evidence of hopeful piety. We know, indeed, that many children of parents undoubtedly pious, far from imitating their example, have been notoriously wicked; but we know also that many parents, really pious, do not educate their children, by any means as they ought. We know also that all the means and endeavors which parents can use, will avail nothing, without the sovereign grace of God; but we likewise know that God usually works by means, and converts those children whose parents labor and pray most earnestly for their conversion. The labors of ministers for their people are no more effectual, without the grace of God, than those of parents for their children; yet St. Paul assures Timothy, that if he took heed to himself and to his doctrine, and continued in them, he should in so doing, both save himself, and them that heard him. Why then may we not with equal reason conclude, that if parents take heed to themselves, to their conduct, and the doctrines of Christ, and continue in them, they shall save, not only themselves, but their children? We cannot at present insist any longer on this part of our subject; but we are, I think, sufficiently warranted to conclude, that God will bestow on every parent who educates children for him, the pleasure of seeing, at least some of them, walking in the truth.

My friends, what a reward is this! How must it relieve the anxiety of a parent's heart, how soothing, how delightful must it be, to see his children safe in the arms of the great Shepherd, happy in the enjoyment of God's love; and to feel assured that

all things shall work together for their good, and that they are heirs of a heavenly inheritance. What music can be more sweet, more ravishing to a parent's ear, than the accents of a beloved and affectionate child exulting in hope of the glory of God, and gratefully declaring that to the prayers, labors and pious example of his parents, he is indebted, under God, for all his present happiness and future hopes. How must it alleviate the pangs of separation, when death arrives, to know that we leave our children under the care of an infinitely good, wise, and powerful being, who will do for them all that they need to have done, and watch over them with more than parental tenderness; to know too that they will soon follow us to the mansions of eternal rest. Or if they are called to go before us, how easy must it be to part with them, when we know that they are going to be with Christ, which is far better, and that we shall soon be reunited to them in his presence to part no more. And hereafter, when we meet them in the abodes of the blessed, when we hear them praising God, for giving them such parents, when we lead them on to the throne of God and the Lamb, saying, Behold, here are we and the children whom thou hast given us; and to hear him greet us with, Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord; — what will be our feelings? how inconceivable our happiness! how great the reward of educating children for God! And even should our endeavors fail of success, still we shall not lose our reward; still the Judge will own and approve us, before the assembled universe, and call us to enter into his joy; for in his kingdom, rewards are ever proportioned, not to our success, but to our zeal and faithfulness.

From what has been said, we infer,

1. That the number of those who educate their children for God is small, very small indeed. This, my friends, is too evident to require proof; for if it be true that a child trained up in the way he should go, will not depart from it when he is old; how few have been thus trained; how few walk in the way they should go, the strait and narrow way to life! And on the contrary how many walk in the way they should not go; the broad way that leadeth to destruction! What multitudes of parents and children go on together, hand in hand, to eternal ruin, without once pausing to inquire or reflect, whither they are

going. My friends, of all the melancholy, heart-rending spectacles, which this lost world affords, this is perhaps the worst; and of all the sins which exist among us, none is more prevalent or destroys more immortal souls, than the neglect of educating children for God. It involves the souls both of parents and children in one common ruin. Nor is any sin more destructive to a nation, or detrimental to the peace of society. How can it be expected that children, who were never governed or restrained while young, should prove friends of good order, or useful members of society when old?

My friends, this subject calls loudly for our attention, as citizens, as parents, as Christians; and if we have any love either for our country, our children, our God, or ourselves, we shall learn to give it that attention which it deserves.

2. Permit me to improve this subject by asking every parent present, for whom are you educating your children? We ask not this question, as having authority to call you to an account; we ask it not with a view to pry into the state of your families; we ask it not to condemn you; but we ask it merely with a view to call your attention to the subject, and to lead conscience to give an answer. Say then, my friends, for whom are you educating your children; for God, or for his enemies? Do you consider your children as a sacred gift, intrusted to you only for a short period, and which the Donor expects to be employed in his service, and returned to him more valuable than when it was bestowed? Do you recognise God's right to dispose of them according to his good pleasure, and to take them from you whenever he shall see best? Have you sincerely and solemnly surrendered them to God, and dedicated them to his service? Are you governed by a supreme regard to the glory of God, in all your efforts for their improvement, and in all the labors, cares and sufferings, which you undergo on their account? Do you educate them for the service of the King of kings, daily laboring to convince them of the infinite importance of securing his favor, and of avoiding his displeasure; conducting every part of their education with ultimate reference to this end, endeavoring to cultivate all those tempers and dispositions which are agreeable to his will, and to prepare them, as far as in your power, for the employments of heaven? Do you study the directions which God has given you in his word, and frequently

implore the assistance of his Holy Spirit, in performing your arduous and responsible duties? Do you pay more attention to the souls than to the bodies of your children? Do their spiritual maladies occasion you more distress than any infirmities of body, and are you more pained by observing in them wrong tempers and sinful passions, than by seeing them awkward and unpolished in their intercourse with society? Not only so, do you esteem the education of the heart more important than that of the mind, and labor more earnestly to cherish correct moral feelings and suitable affections than to impart intellectual acquirements? In a word, do your children see in your daily deportment, in your conversation, in your very looks, that all your aims and wishes respecting them, are centered in the one great wish for their conversion; that in comparison with this, you regard no other object as of any importance, and that you would be content to see them poor, despised, and contemned in this world, if they may but secure eternal riches and an unfading crown in that which is to come? If you are not at least attempting to do all this, you are not educating your children for God.

If any feel concerned that they have hitherto neglected this great and important duty, we would improve the subject,

3. By urging them immediately to give it that attention which it merits. Consider the reasonableness of this duty. You are the natural guides, friends, and protectors of your children. They look to you for direction in their yet untrodden path. They are necessarily dependent on others for all the light which can be made to shine on their future course; and their unsuspecting feet will follow wherever you lead the way. How cruel in you to lead them wrong, knowing, as you do, the tremendous and irreparable consequences of such guidance!

This duty may be urged on the ground of justice. You have been instrumental of conveying to your children a depraved nature; and are bound by every principle of justice to do all in your power to eradicate that depravity, and to oppose to its tendencies all the counteracting influences, with which the precepts, the threatenings, the promises, and the Spirit of God supply you; and to add to all the weight of your uniform example and daily prayers.

And let the reward, which God promises to those who educate

their children for him, stimulate you to maintain over them a steady government and salutary discipline; to give them line upon line, and precept upon precept; to talk of their obligations, their duties, and their prospects, when you sit in the house, when you walk by the way, when you rest and when you rise, and on all suitable occasions, — till they shall be taken from under your care, or you removed from them, to enjoy the immediate instruction of the Great Father of our spirits.

SERMON LXXIII.

HOW LITTLE CHILDREN ARE PREVENTED FROM COMING TO CHRIST.

But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. — Mark x. 14.

In the passage of which these words are a part, we have a beautiful instance of the fulfilment of an ancient prediction respecting Christ, that he should gather the lambs of his flock with his arms, and carry them in his bosom. It appears from the context that some persons, probably believing parents who had felt the efficacy of this blessing themselves, and who were anxious that their infant offspring should enjoy the same privilege, brought to him young children that he might touch them; or, as it is expressed by another Evangelist, that he might lay his hands on them and pray. His disciples, who probably thought these children too young to derive any advantage from Christ, and were apprehensive that he would be interrupted and wearied with their applications, rebuked those who brought them. But our merciful Saviour, more compassionate and less concerned for his own comfort than his disciples, soon gave them to understand, that they must on no account discourage any, however young, from approaching him. When Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer little

children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.

My friends, we here see a very unusual sight. We see the meek and lowly Jesus, not only displeased but much displeased; displeased too, not with his opposers or enemies, but with his own disciples. And what had they done to excite his displeasure? Had they been guilty of neglect, unkindess, or a criminal disregard to his comfort or convenience? No; had this been the case, he would have passed it over in silence, or have been the first to make an excuse for their conduct. But they discouraged little children from approaching him; and this was an offence which he could not suffer to pass unreproved. Since Christ is yesterday, to-day, and forever, the same, we may conclude that he still entertains similar feelings towards all who imitate the conduct of his disciples in this respect. From our text, therefore, we may fairly deduce the following proposition.

Christ is much displeased with all who, in any way prevent or discourage little children from approaching him.

With a view to illustrate and establish this proposition, I shall endeavor to show who are guilty of preventing or discouraging little children from coming to Christ; and why Christ is displeased with such persons.

I. Who are guilty of preventing or discouraging children from coming to Christ?

I answer: Persons may be guilty of this sin either directly or indirectly. All are indirectly guilty of it,

1. Who do not come to Christ themselves, and publicly profess obedience to his authority. Man, my friends, is an imitative being. In children the propensity to imitate others is peculiarly strong. They come into the world ignorant and helpless, and naturally look to others for guidance, example, and instruction. Their young and tender minds are ready to receive any impression, and take their complexion in a great degree from surrounding objects. What is done by those who are older, and who ought to be wiser than themselves, they are ready to conclude must be right. Instinctively grasping the first hand that is held out to them, they suffer themselves to be led along without knowing or asking whither they are to go. Did they, during their early years, see all around them flocking to Christ and yielding unreserved obedience to his commands; were they

accustomed from infancy to hear his name frequently mentioned with reverence and affection, and his character described as the perfection of excellence and loveliness; they would, probably in most instances, be led by their imitative propensities under the guidance of the divine Spirit to give him the first place in their hearts, and choose him as their best friend. But alas! how different is the scene which the world presents to their view. They see the great mass of those around them, neglecting and disobeying the Saviour of sinners; they seldom hear his name or that of their heavenly Father mentioned, but in a way of profanation; they see the broad road, of sinful conformity with the world, crowded with travellers eager in the pursuit of pleasure, wealth and honor; every thing, which they see and hear, in short, tends to corrupt their unsuspecting minds, which are of themselves but too prone to choose and follow the downward path. Supposing that what is so generally neglected can not be of much importance, and that, if they are no worse than those around them, their condition is safe, they eagerly plunge into the tumultuous current, and are rapidly swept away to perdition, with the careless multitude whose example they follow, unless divine grace, with resistless arm, snatches them from the gulf to which they are hastening, conveys them to the bosom of Christ, and plants their feet on the Rock of ages.

Such, my friends, are the pernicious effects of bad example on the youthful mind. Now every person, who does not come to Christ and publicly profess obedience to his authority, and conduct in a suitable manner, helps to increase the number and strengthen the force of evil example. He pours the stream of his influence into the fatal torrent which is sweeping away the rising generation into the gulf of eternal ruin. He stands as a way-mark at the entrance of life, to direct infant travelers into the path of ruin. Nor can any one excuse himself by pretending that his example has no influence. There is not, I venture to assert, a person in this assembly whose example does not, in a degree at least, influence the present conduct and future destiny of some young immortal; and if his example be not such as it ought to be, he indirectly prevents children from coming to Christ, and is answerable for all the consequences of his conduct. And if he be a parent, these observations apply to him with ten-fold force. The influence of his example on the minds

of his children will be almost omnipotent; we clearly see that nothing short of Omnipotence can prevent it from causing their destruction. A chain in the hand of a demon would not more irresistibly drag them to ruin than the example of an irreligious parent; for to his parents more than to all others, does a child look for direction. During the first years of life, while his character is forming, and most lasting impressions made, he considers their sayings as oracles, their word as law, and their opinions as the dictates of unerring wisdom, and their conduct as the pattern he is to imitate.

How powerfully then must the example of those parents, who neglect to come to Christ themselves, tend to prevent or discourage their children from approaching him: not to mention that by refusing to devote themselves to Christ, they put it out of their power to dedicate their children to him, and thus deprive them of all the blessings which would result from such a dedication made in the exercise of faith.

2. If those, who do not come to Christ, whose example is only negatively bad, are guilty of the sin mentioned in our text, much more are those guilty whose example is positively bad. In this class are included all who profess wrong principles, or openly indulge in vicious practices. The open infidel who denies or calls in question the divine authority of revelation; the conceited infidel who ridicules or explains away the most important doctrines; the scoffer or profane swearer who familiarizes the infant ear to the language of impiety, and teaches the untutored tongue to utter it; the sabbath breaker who tramples on the barrier with which God has encircled the sacred day; the liar or slanderer who by his example leads the young to trifle with truth and with the reputation of their fellow creatures; the slave to intemperance and sensuality who seduces them into the paths of dissipation and excess, are all, I will not say indirectly, but directly preventing the young from coming to Christ. Every such character does much to bar up the way of life, is a stumbling block over which many will stumble, and fall to rise no more. And if he be one whose talents, wealth, learning, rank, or vivacity of manner gives him extensive influence in society, the pernicious effects of his example will be incalculable. Under his deadly shade no plants of purity will flourish, no flowers of virtue bloom. He breathes around con-

tagion, pestilence and death, and while he sinks into the abyss of vice and infidelity, the whirlpool which he forms, will ingulf every thing that comes within the sphere of its action.

But if he be a parent what shall we say? If there be a sight on earth at which humanity must shudder, over which angels might weep, it is the sight of a young, a numerous family following with unsuspecting confidence a ruthless fiend, in the shape of a parent, who extends the hand of a guide only to lead them far from him who would gather them in his arms and carry them in his bosom; and betrays the helpless lambs to that roaring lion who goes about seeking whom he may devour.

3. Those are indirectly guilty of preventing their children from coming to Christ, who employ no means to bring them to him, who are careful to educate them for this world but not for the next. That children are prone to imbibe the opinions and imitate the conduct of others, especially of their parents, has already been observed. Especially do they learn from them to estimate the value of different objects. What others neglect or despise they consider as worthless; what others highly prize they esteem as valuable. Hence if those who have the charge of their education treated them as they ought, if they appeared more solicitous for their souls than their bodies, for their spiritual and eternal, than their temporal interests; if they frequently mentioned Christ to them, as the pearl of great price, and spake of an interest in his favor as the one thing needful, compared with which every thing else is worthless, it is highly probable that, by the blessing of God, they might be early led to prize Christ in some measure as he deserves, and to feel unsafe and uneasy till an interest in his favor was obtained. Agreeably, the Scriptures assure us that, if we train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it. But if children perceive that their parents and others, who are entrusted with their education, are more solicitous to educate them for this world than for the next; more anxious for their present than their future welfare; more desirous to see them prosperous than pious, and more concerned for the health of their bodies than the salvation of their souls, they will inevitably be led to conclude that religion is of little consequence; that to come to Christ is needless; and that to obtain learning, riches, honor and applause, are the great objects for which men were created.

All parents therefore who thus educate their children for this world and not for the next, take the most effectual means to prevent them from coming to Christ, and to cultivate that worldly-mindedness which is directly opposed to the love of God. And, my friends, how great is the number who do this. How many even among the professed people of God are guilty in this respect. If it be true that a child, brought up in the right way, will never forsake it, few indeed are educated as they ought to be; for you need not be told that small is the number who follow the right way to the end of life. My friends, did you take one half the pains, or display one half the concern to educate your children for God that you do for the world, you would most probably see them walking in the truth, and avoid the guilt which you now contract, of preventing their coming to Christ.

Under this branch of my subject I may observe, that if parents feel unwilling or unable to instruct their children themselves, they ought at least to countenance and assist those who are willing to do it. Yet many will not even do this. Most gladly, my friends, would we do all in our power to bring these lambs of the flock to Christ, and store their minds with religious truth, would you give us an opportunity of doing it. That many do this we acknowledge with thankfulness and pleasure. But we are compelled to add, that many do not. No one can suppose that more than half the children of this society, who are of a suitable age, have at any time attended on those catachetical instructions which are communicated in this place after divine service. Yet a very slight exertion of parental authority would secure their attendance. If this exertion is withheld, what must your children think? They see you sparing no pains or expense to give them that knowledge which is necessary for them in this world. They know that you require their attendance at school, and pay masters for instructing them. Yet when they have an opportunity of acquiring religious knowledge without expense, you do not require them to improve it. Must they not suppose that you view religious knowledge as a thing of no consequence; and religion itself as something which you do not wish them to acquire? And does not this negligence powerfully tend to prevent them from coming to Christ? We would however indulge the hope, that when the

return of a milder season shall permit us to resume our labors with the rising generation, we shall find that this negligence proceeded rather from inattention to the subject, than from a wish to deprive your children of religious instruction.

4. If those, who neglect to give their children a religious education, are guilty of indirectly preventing them from coming to Christ, much more so are they who give them an education which is positively bad, and which tends to foster and strengthen the evil propensities of their nature; propensities which must be eradicated before they can embrace the Saviour. Yet such an education there is reason to fear that not a few parents give their children, though probably without intending it. How often, for instance, do parents encourage a spirit of revenge in their infant children by teaching them to strike any inanimate object which may have accidentally hurt them. How often do they speak of dress, ornaments, or personal beauty, in a way which is calculated to render children proud and vain of these frivolous and perishing distinctions! How often do they, by praise injudiciously bestowed, foster a spirit of envy and false ambition, and encourage that emulation which the apostle expressly mentions among the works of the flesh. How often do they humor and indulge them in such a manner as is calculated to make them peevish and discontented through life, and to render their wills unmanageably stubborn and perverse. These are but a few of the evil propensities which the education, received by many children, tends to strengthen and increase. Yet these propensities are diametrically opposed to the religion of Christ, and tend to prevent children from embracing it. All therefore who foster and encourage them must be considered as guilty of the fault we have been describing.

Still more forcibly do these observations apply to such as endeavor to discourage their children from attending to religion, lest it should render them melancholy or singular; or who speak of its friends and institutions, in their presence, with disrespect or contempt. Children begin to listen to conversation and to receive impressions from it, at a much earlier age than is commonly supposed; and their first impressions are not only most easily made, but are generally most deep and lasting. Almost every seed, which is then sown in the mind, will take root and produce fruit in abundance through life and often through eter-

nity. There have been many well authenticated instances in which the recollection, in after life, of some word or sentence, dropped by a pious parent, has proved the means of bringing persons, first to reflection, and finally to Christ; and hence we may conclude that at the judgment day, when the secrets of all hearts are laid open, it will appear that a jest, a sneer, or sarcastic observation, respecting the friends or institutions of religion, uttered in the presence of children, and recollected by them at some future day, has, in many instances, been the means of prejudicing them against it, and leading them far from Christ, from heaven and happiness. The heathen philosophers had a maxim which was, "Great is the reverence due to children." The import and design of this maxim, as understood by them, was, that great care and attention should be shown in guarding against every thing in our conduct and conversation, which tended to corrupt the infant or youthful mind. But if the heathen, who knew nothing of the worth or immortality of the soul, felt the necessity of adopting this maxim, how much more deeply should it be felt by us, to whom life and immortality are brought to light, and who are taught to know the unspeakable worth of the soul by the price which Christ paid for its redemption.

Having thus attempted to show who are guilty of preventing children from coming to Christ, I proceed to show, as was proposed,

II. Why Christ is displeased with such persons.

1. Christ is displeased with such as prevent children from approaching him, because in doing it they display a temper which he greatly dislikes, and which is diametrically opposite to his own. The temper of Christ is emphatically a temper of love for the souls of men and of compassion for sinners. Of the existence and strength of this temper he has given the strongest and most unequivocal proofs. His object in coming into our world, the object of all his labors, of his sufferings and death, was to seek and to save those who are lost. But it is a long established maxim, that like rejoices in like. Christ, therefore, cannot but be pleased with those who discover a temper similar to his own; and unite their exertions with his in promoting the salvation of sinners. And on the contrary, he cannot but be displeased with such as possess a temper directly the reverse of

his own, and exhibit no love or compassion for perishing immortal beings; no desire to bring them to the knowledge of him, who alone can give them salvation. Still more must he be displeased with those who discourage or prevent any from approaching him; for this is the very temper of evil spirits whose whole desire and employment it is, to seduce men into the paths of sin, and prevent them from coming to the knowledge of Christ.

2. Christ is displeased with those who prevent or endeavor to discourage children from coming to him, because in so doing they oppose his will; and so far as they are able, frustrate his grand design, a design in which he feels most deeply interested. It is his will that not one of these little ones should perish. It is his will that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. It is his will that all men should be fellow workers with him in bringing about this great, and to him, most desirable event. To oppose the accomplishment of this event, therefore, is opposing his will. It is touching him on the most tender point. It is like touching the very apple of his eye. He can bear any thing better than this. When his disciples manifested the most inexcusable unbelief, he gently rebuked them. When they ungratefully slept instead of watching with him in his last agonies, he made an excuse for them. When Peter once and again denied that he knew him, he turned and brought him to repentance by a look. But when these very disciples discouraged parents from bringing to him their children he was much displeased. Nay more, when Peter endeavored to dissuade him from dying for sinners, he turned and said to him, get thee behind me, satan; thou art an offence to me. These instances plainly show how deeply the heart of Christ is engaged and interested in the great work of saving sinners; and why nothing displeases him so much, as attempts to oppose or hinder its accomplishment.

3. Christ is angry with those who prevent children from approaching him, because it tends to rob him of a part of his reward. This reward principally consists in the pleasure of saving sinners. He participates largely in the joy which is felt in heaven when a sinner repents; and is especially pleased to see the young seek after him; to hear children crying, Hosanna to the Son of David. No praises are more sweet to him

than those which grace produces from the lips of babes. Whenever he hears and sees such things, he sees of the travail of his soul; he sees the fruit of his sufferings, and is satisfied. But those, who prevent or discourage children from approaching him, deprive him of this pleasure, rob him of a part of his reward, and of course excite his displeasure.

4. Christ is displeased with those who are guilty of this conduct, because it evinces a disregard and contempt of those blessings which he died to purchase. Those who discourage others from approaching him, cannot of course believe in him themselves, and the language of their conduct is, an interest in Christ is of no consequence to us, or our children. Temporal prosperity and the favor of the world are much more important; and if our children can but succeed here, we care not what becomes of them hereafter. That Christ is displeased with those who thus disbelieve him, is evident from his conduct while here on earth. We are informed that he looked round about upon his unbelieving hearers, with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. As he is yesterday, to-day, and forever, the same, he must still feel similar emotions, and is doubtless now looking round with a mixture of grief and anger on those, in this assembly, who do not cordially believe in him themselves, and feel anxious that the rising generation should embrace him.

IMPROVEMENT. 1. This subject may be improved for the purpose of self-examination. For this purpose permit me to ask, my hearers, whether any of you are guilty, either directly or indirectly, by your example, conduct or conversation, of discouraging children from coming to Christ, or of preventing others from bringing them to him. To assist you in answering this question, permit me to remind you, that in this, as in other respects, he that is not with Christ is against him. Your example must be either positively good, or positively bad; and every one, who does not encourage children in coming to Christ, is guilty of indirectly preventing it; and his negligence leads them to suppose that to come is of no consequence. They will generally be more influenced by your example than by the precepts of Christ; and if your example is not good, if you do not enter the way of life yourselves, and invite them to follow, you do in effect prevent them from entering it.

To illustrate these remarks, permit me to mention a story, Mr. Baxter relates, of a shepherd driving his flock over a high and narrow bridge, built across a torrent. The foremost of the flock, terrified by some accidental occurrence, leaped over the bridge into the flood below; the others, not seeing the danger into which their leaders had fallen, and supposing they might safely follow them, leaped after them, one by one, till all were destroyed. In a similar manner, I suppose, generations of mankind perish. We have all, says the prophet, gone astray like sheep, and turned every one to his own way. The end of this way is destruction. Into this destruction all past sinners, who died impenitent, have already fallen. But we see not the gulf into which they have plunged; and, like the foolish sheep, pursue with headlong impetuosity the same road. Our children, supposing that they may safely follow, where we lead the way, rush after us, and find too late we have guided them to their ruin: while their children in turn, unless grace prevent, will follow them in like manner to perdition. Thus like a river whose waters are successively swallowed up in the ocean, one generation of men after another, is led on blindfold by the influence of example, and plunged into the gulf which has no bottom. Need any thing more be said to show the infinite importance of setting a good example before our children, and leading them after us in the path of life.

2. From this subject parents and others, to whom the care of young immortals is entrusted, may learn the awful responsibility which rests upon them.

Were the guidance and direction of one, two, or more worlds entrusted to you, my friends, would you not feel that yours was a most important and awfully responsible situation? My friends, if you are parents, something infinitely more important than worlds is committed to your care. You have the charge of immortal souls; souls, which our Saviour has taught us are each of them worth more than whole worlds. This charge is committed to you, that you may bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And God considers you as answerable for the performance of this duty, and in some measure for the salvation of your children. At least he will consider you as answerable for their destruction, should they perish, unless you do all in your power to prevent it. If you doubt this, hear what he says

to his ministers. Son of man I have made thee a watchman; hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, he shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand. But, my friends, parents are at least as much appointed by God to be watchmen over their children, as ministers are to be watchmen over their people. Therefore if parents prove unfaithful, the blood of their children will be required at their hands. If any still doubt, let them hear what God says to his ancient people, who permitted and by example taught their children to worship idols. Thou hast taken, says he, my sons and my daughters whom thou hast borne unto me, and hast sacrificed them unto idols; and is this a small matter, that thou hast slain my children? Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the poor innocents; I have not found it by secret search, but upon them all. My friends, how much reason have many parents to cry, Deliver us from blood guiltiness. How dreadfully is our whole land stained and polluted by their blood, and how loudly does it call for vengeance! I am more and more persuaded, that neglecting the religious education of children is one of the most crying sins of which we are guilty as a people. If any doubt this, let him recollect the passage already quoted, Train up a child in the way he should go, and he will not depart from it. My friends, these are the words of God, of the God of truth. Look round and see how few are walking in the right way; hence learn how few have been brought up in the way they should go. Are there any of your children who do not walk in the way they should go? It must be because they have not been properly educated, and the blessing of God not sufficiently prayed for. And it is perhaps impossible for any one, who is not a real consistent Christian, to educate children properly. None but such can truly dedicate their children to God. None but such can sincerely pray for, or obtain from Christ that wisdom and grace, which are necessary to bring them up for God; and none but such can expect a blessing to follow their exertions. You can readily see that an unbelieving, impenitent man is not qualified to be a minister of Christ, to guide immortal souls to heaven. How then can an impenitent, unbelieving parent bring up his children as he ought, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? My friends,

what a powerful motive does this afford to induce you to become the real disciples of Christ. Not only your own salvation, but very probably that of your children, depends upon it. If then you love them, if you love yourselves, if you would not sink under the weight of their blood, and hear them cursing you forever, as the authors of their ruin, be persuaded without delay to come to Christ, to bring them with you, to bind yourselves and them to him in an everlasting covenant.

SERMON LXXIV.

THE CHILDREN OF THE COVENANT, THE SAVIOUR'S FIRST CARE.

Ye are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. — Acts iii. 25, 26.

These words compose part of a sermon delivered by St. Peter to an assembly of his countrymen; a sermon, on many accounts highly interesting, and especially on account of the success with which it was attended; for it appears from the context, that it was the means of converting some thousands of the hearers. In that part of it which has now been read, the apostle suggests several considerations which were calculated deeply to affect the minds of his audience. He reminds them, that they were descended from pious ancestors; that, in consequence of this, they were the children of the covenant which God had made with their fathers, and especially with Abraham, the illustrious progenitor of their race; and that, from regard to this covenant, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, had sent him first to them, to bless them in turning away every one of them from his iniquities.

My hearers, are there any in this assembly to whom this address of the apostle to his countrymen is applicable? There

are. All the baptized persons here present, who have been dedicated to God by believing parents, and who have not cordially embraced the Saviour, are in a situation almost precisely similar to that of the audience whom St. Peter addressed on this occasion. To all such baptized persons present then, to all in this assembly, who have been dedicated to God, by believing parents, in the ordinance of baptism, I say, Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with your parents, and to you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, now sends him to bless you in turning away every one of you from your iniquities. In discoursing farther on this passage, so interesting to believing parents and to their children, I shall endeavor,

I. To explain and establish the assertion, that all who have been dedicated to God by believing parents, are children of the covenant which God has made with their parents, and especially with Abraham, the great father of the faithful.

With this view I remark, that the blessings of the covenant, which God made with Abraham, were all included in three great promises. The first was, In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. The second was, To thee and to thy seed will I give this land; that is, the land of Canaan. The third was, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee. Of these promises the first was made to Abraham as an individual. It merely assured him that the promised seed of the woman, who was to bring blessings to all nations, should descend from him, or be one of his posterity. This promise has long since been fulfilled by the birth of Christ, the promised seed, who was born of a daughter of Abraham. Of course we have nothing to do with it, except to receive the Saviour whose coming it reveals. The second promise was made to Abraham, considered as the progenitor of the Jewish nation, the twelve tribes of Israel; and this promise also has been fulfilled by their being put in possession of Canaan, the promised land. With this promise therefore we have no concern, only so far as it has a typical reference to the heavenly Canaan. The third promise, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee, — was made to Abraham, considered as a believer, in covenant with God; as the great father of the faithful, or of all who should believe with a faith similar to his own. In this promise, the covenant which God made with Abraham principally and essentially

consists; in the stipulations which we find in the 17th chapter of Genesis, where God says to him, I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee. It is this covenant, of which circumcision was the seal, with which we are principally concerned, and to which the following discourse refers.

That the Jews were the children of the covenant, it is needless to prove, since it is everywhere asserted by the inspired writers, as well as in our text. In passages too numerous to mention particularly, they are styled God's covenant people, children of the promise, and represented as being born in covenant, and as enjoying covenanted blessings. Speaking of the Jews in his own day, St. Paul says, Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. This covenant, it may be farther remarked, was perfectly distinct from the Mosaic law, and from the covenant which God made with the Jews as a nation, when he brought them out of Egypt, and which was afterwards renewed at Mount Sinai; for the apostle tells us, that it was confirmed of God in Christ four hundred and thirty years before the law was given; and that being thus confirmed it could never be disannulled. Agreeably, we meet with various allusions to this covenant scattered through the Old Testament. The children of thy servants, says the psalmist, shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee. The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. And as for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth even forever. And again God says, fear not O Jacob my servant, and thou Jeshurun, whom I have chosen, for I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among grass, and as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto

the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Since then it cannot be denied, that the Jews were in covenant with God, the only question is, whether the baptized children of professed believers, at the present day, are in the same situation; whether they, like the Jews, are born in covenant, and stand in the same relation to God, which the Jews formerly sustained. With a view to prove that they are so, I observe,

1. It is frequently predicted by the prophets, that in the latter days the Gentiles should, like the Jews, be brought into covenant with God, and share with them in the blessings of the covenant. Thus in the prophecy of Hosea, God says, I will have mercy on them that had not obtained mercy. I will call them my people which were not my people. This passage is quoted by St. Paul, to prove that the Gentiles, or nations, as the word signifies, should be taken into covenant with God, and become his people, as the Jews had formerly been. In many chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah, this event is more particularly predicted and described. The Jewish church is there assured, that the Gentiles shall come to her light, that they shall come bringing her children in their arms, and that these shall supply the place of the children whom she had lost.

2. In the second place, we learn from many passages in the New Testament, that all these promises and predictions were fulfilled. We are there told, that Abraham is the father of all who believe, though they be not circumcised, as were the Jews; that the blessing of Abraham has come upon the Gentiles; that all who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. St. Paul, writing to the Ephesian church, says, Wherefore, remember that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now ye, who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. And in the succeeding chapter he speaks of it as a great mystery, which had not been made known, but which was then revealed, that the Gentiles, or nations should be fellow heirs with the Jews, and of the same body. My hearers, reflect a moment on the import of these passages. They teach us,

that all true believers, all who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed; but if they are Abraham's seed, they must be Abraham's heirs, heirs of the same promises and spiritual privileges, which he enjoyed. But one of the privileges which he enjoyed, was the liberty of bringing his children into covenant with God, and one of the promises which was made to him was, I will be a God to thy seed after thee. If then, Christians are Abraham's heirs, they also have the same privilege of bringing their children into covenant with God, and God's language to every Christian parent is, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee. Agreeably, the same passage tells us, that they are heirs according to the promise, and that they are fellow-heirs with the Jews. It appears then, that Christians stand in the same place, which was formerly occupied by the Jews; we take up what they laid down; we receive the privileges and blessings which they forfeited; the kingdom of God, which was taken from them according to our Saviour's prediction, has been given to us; and therefore if their children were in covenant with God, so, my Christian friends, are ours. This conclusion is confirmed, and the whole subject illustrated by St. Paul in that well known allegorical passage, in which he compares the church to a good olive tree, of which the Jews were the natural branches. But these natural branches, he tells us, were broken off, and Gentile believers grafted in in their room; and these Gentile believers, he adds, now partake of the fatness and sap of the good olive tree; that is, they enjoy those church privileges, which the Jews lost by unbelief; and, of course, the privilege of bringing their children into covenant with God.

That this must be the apostle's meaning, is evident from another passage in the same chapter, in which he says, if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches. By the root here he evidently means parents, and, by the branches, their children; and the import of his assertion is, that if the parents be holy, so are the children. It must, however, be observed, that he is here speaking, not of personal, but of relative holiness, of that kind of holiness which results from being dedicated to God. In this sense, the vessels of the tabernacle were said to be holy, because they were consecrated to the service of God; and in the same verse, the children of believing parents are holy, because they have been consecrated to God in the ordinance of baptism.

The passages which we have quoted, are scarcely a tenth part of those which might be adduced from the Scriptures on this subject; but they are, I conceive, abundantly sufficient to show that believers are the children and heirs of Abraham; that, like him they are in covenant with God; that the same promise, which was made to him, is now made to them; that they have the same right to dedicate their children to God, as he had; and, consequently, that all the baptized children of believing parents, are, as the Jews formerly, the children of the covenant which God made with their fathers, and especially with Abraham, the great father of the faithful.

If these truths have been established, it follows, that we are authorized to address every baptized child of believing parents in the language of St. Peter in our text; for if such persons are in a situation similar to that of his hearers, we ought to address them in a similar manner. To all such persons then, in this assembly, to all of every age who have believing parents, but who are not themselves believers, I say, To you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. That you may understand the import of this address, it is necessary to remind you, that one of the privileges which the Jews enjoyed in consequence of being children of the covenant was, the enjoyment of the first offer of that salvation which Christ had accomplished. Thus, when Christ commissioned his disciples to preach the gospel, he charged them to begin at Jerusalem, to preach the glad tidings first to the Jews. Until they should have done this, he forbade them to go to the Gentiles, or to enter into any city of the Samaritans. This command the apostles strictly observed. They preached the gospel at first, we are told, to none but the Jews only; and St. Paul, addressing the Jews at Antioch, says, It was needful that the gospel of Christ should first be preached to you. These remarks will enable you to understand, why St. Peter, in our text, says to his Jewish hearers, to you first God sends his Son to bless you. It is the same at the present day. God sends the offer of salvation first, to the children of believing parents.

In this respect he acts as a wise earthly prince would do. Were such a prince disposed to confer distinguishing favors and privileges upon any person, he would doubtless offer them to the

children of his obedient subjects, who had sworn allegiance to him before he offered them to the children of rebels, or of strangers, who had not submitted to his government. Now your parents have sworn allegiance to God, and engaged to submit to his government, as obedient subjects. They have also engaged to use all their influence to induce you to do the same. In token of their readiness to do this, they have solemnly and publicly dedicated you to God, to be his forever; and he has so far accepted this dedication, that he now sends you the first offer of pardon and salvation, through his Son. In his name, then, in the name of your parents' God, of Him into whose adorable name you have been baptised, I now solemnly make you this offer. In his name, I declare that he has sent his Son, in whom all blessings are deposited, and by whom they are conferred, to bless you, to bless every one of you; to bless you with all temporal and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. At the same time, I inform you, that he can confer these blessings upon you only by turning you from your iniquities; for so long of you cleave to them, it is impossible that Christ should bless or prove a blessing to you; since between sin and misery there is an inseparable connection. I also inform you that you cannot be turned from your iniquities but by your own consent; for so long as you live and are unwilling to renounce them, it is impossible that you and they should be separated. Christ's language to you is, Turn ye at my reproof, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you. Come ye out from the ungodly world, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Such are the invitations, such the promises of your heavenly Father and Redeemer. And now I ask every baptized person present, what answer will you return to these invitations? With respect to those of you who have arrived to years of understanding, it is time that your answer was given. It is time that it were known to whom you belong; whether you are for Christ or against him; whether you intend to ratify or to discard what your parents have done in your behalf. While you were infants, God permitted them to act for you; but now you must act for yourselves, and stand or fall by your own choice. And what is that choice? Will you take your

parents' God to be your God? Will you give yourselves up to him as you have already been given up by them? Will you take upon yourselves that covenant which they have made in your behalf, and perform its duties, that you may enjoy its blessings? Will you receive Christ as all must do who would receive power from him to become the children of God? and as a proof of your willingness to receive him, will you turn from your iniquities, and renounce the sinful pleasures and pursuits of which you are naturally so fond? Before you reply to these questions, permit me to suggest some considerations, which, by the blessing of God, may induce you to return such an answer as your duty and happiness require. In the first place, permit me to remind you that you are this day to determine whether God or the world shall be your portion, whether Christ or Satan shall be your king. One of these masters you must serve; both you cannot serve, and you are now to decide, in the presence of heaven and earth, which you will serve. Your conduct from this day will show whose servants you intend to be.

In the second place, permit me to remind you, that the choice you make will make a complete discovery of your true characters. If you choose to persist in pursuing worldly objects, and the pleasures of sin, it will prove that you prefer sin to holiness, that you are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; nay, it will prove that you are God's enemies, for the Scriptures assure us that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, and that whosoever will love the world is the enemy of God. What is still worse, it will prove that you are irreconcilably God's enemies, that you are so strongly opposed to his character and government, that the tears, entreaties, and example of your parents cannot induce you to love him.

In the third place, remember that your choice is to be made for eternity. You are not to choose whether you will serve sin and Satan in this world, and God in the next; but whether you will be the slaves of sin, and, of course, the enemies of God forever; for what you choose to be in time, you will continue to be through eternity. On the decision which you this day make, it will probably depend whether myriads of ages hence you shall be angels in heaven, or spirits of disobedience in hell; for it becomes you to remember,

In the fourth place, that your choice will decide, not only

your character, but your doom. You must receive the wages of that master whom you choose to serve. Now the wages of sin, we read, is death, eternal death; but the gift of God is everlasting life. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. They that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corrruption, etc. In choosing between God and the world then, you are choosing between life and death, between heaven and hell, between happiness eternal and ineffable, and misery endless and unutterable. And will you then, can you then choose death and hell and everlasting wo? Will you, by your conduct, say to all about you, I am a wretch so totally devoid of goodness, that I prefer the world to God, the tempter to Christ, sin to holiness, hell to heaven. If so, surely your guilt will be no common guilt; for you can make no excuse. You cannot even plead ignorance; for you have lived in pious families; you have had a religious education; you have seen the influence of religion upon your parents; you have had good examples placed before you; you have from your earliest years heard much of God and of your Saviour; you have heard many prayers addressed to them; your earthly parents have united with your Father in heaven, in persuading you to love him; and his word has been read in your presence, and placed in your hands. If then you reject your God and Saviour, you reject him knowingly and voluntarily. You reject a known, and not an unknown God. After seeing the difference between a life of religion and a life of sin, you deliberately choose the latter. Nay more, you reject not only God, but your parents' God; you violate not only the obligations which all his creatures are under to love and serve him, but the peculiar obligations which result from your baptismal dedication to God, and say by your conduct, let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us. Your conduct then dishonors God more than the conduct of a thousand heathen, who never heard his name; and if they, as the apostle declares, are without excuse, how totally inexcusable must you be, should you follow their example. In addition to this, you will be guilty of the most inexcusable ingratitude. In giving you pious parents, God has conferred on you one of the greatest blessings which he could bestow. He might have caused your souls to inhabit bodies among the heathen, where you would never have

heard of a Saviour, where your parents would have dedicated you to false gods, and perhaps have offered you in sacrifice upon their altars! And will you requite him for this favor by practically saying, I regret that my parents were pious, or that they dedicated me to God? Would I had been born in an irreligious family, where I should never have been troubled with religion or prayer, but where I might have indulged in the pursuit of worldy pleasures without interruption or restraint. Will you ungratefully undo all that your parents have done for your salvation, and tear yourselves out of the arms of the Saviour in which they have placed you? Will those of you whose parents have ascended to heaven, do this? If so, remember that as your guilt will be no common guilt, so your punishment will be no common punishment. How awfully aggravated it will be, you may learn from the terrible threatenings denounced against the unbelieving Jews who like you were children of the covenant. Christ declares that the very heathen will rise up against them in the day of judgment and condemn them; that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in that day than for them, and that while many shall come from the east and the west, and the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God, the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In a word, he tells us that they who know their Lord's will and do it not shall be beaten with many stripes. And will you then, by refusing to turn from your iniquities, pull down upon yourselves this terrible fate? Shall all the tears, prayers and exertions of your parents only serve to increase your condemnation? Shall the baptismal water with which you have been sprinkled, be converted into drops of liquid fire? Shall the blessings which Christ was sent to bring, be transformed into curses; and will you, to whom they are first offered, be the first to reject them? You are like Capernaum, raised, as it were, to heaven by your privileges. Will you, by abusing or neglecting them, be yourselves cast down to hell, to the lowest hell? And now I wait for your reply.

What answer shall I return to him that sent me, to him who sends his Son to bless you in turning away every one of you from your iniquities? I suspect that most of you will return no direct answer, but plead for time to deliberate, for a little lon-

ger delay. But, my friends, this time cannot be granted. You have already delayed too long. The Jewish children were required to partake of the passover, and appear before God at the solemn feasts, as soon as they arrived at a proper age; and this, as we learn from our Saviour's example, was the age of twelve years. If they refused or delayed to comply, they were doomed to be cut off from among the people; to lose forever the privileges which they slighted. Now a large proportion of those whom I am addressing, have not only reached, but overpast this period of life. Not a few baptized persons present have reached the meridian of life, and some have even advanced beyond it. You ought then long since to have embraced the Saviour, and thus have become prepared to appear at the table of Christ, who, the apostle tells us, is our passover that was sacrificed for us. Already are you liable to be cut off forever from his people, in consequence of delaying to receive him; and will you then talk of a longer delay? It cannot be granted. Soon will you, like the Jews, be broken off as withered branches, because of unbelief. Soon will the kingdom of God be taken from you and given to others. God's language to you is, Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts. This day then, this very day, must you make your choice. This very day must you choose between God and the world, between Christ and the tempter, between heaven and hell. This day, before you leave this house, must you decide the great, the all-important question, whether you will be happy or miserable forever. Heaven and hell are now waiting your answer. Heaven is waiting to rejoice in your repentance. Hell is waiting to exult in your fall. To which then will you give joy? The answer is given. Your hearts have uttered it; God has heard it. It is already recorded in heaven, and your future conduct will soon cause its import to be known on earth. At least, some of you have, I hope, answered as you ought. Some of you, I hope are ready to say to Christ's church, as did Ruth to Naomi, Entreat us not to leave you, nor to return from following after you; for where you go, we will go; where you dwell, we will dwell; your people shall be our people, and your God our God. The Lord do so to us and more also, if aught but death part you and us. Farewell, vain world! farewell, sinful pleasures! farewell, sinful compan-

ions! Our Fathers' God calls us, our Saviour invites us, and we have determined to comply with the call, and cast in our lot among his people. And is this your determination? this the sincere language of your hearts? Welcome then, ye once wandering lambs of the flock; welcome to the fold of Christ; welcome to his church, welcome to the good and great Shepherd, who gathers the lambs with his arms and carries them in his bosom. We bid you a thousand and a thousand welcomes to the ark of safety; and while we congratulate you on your happy escape from the snares of the world, and the toils of the tempter, we would unite with you in blessing him who has set your sin-entangled feet at liberty, and inclined you to choose the wise, the better part. You now ratify what your parents have done in your name; you consent to take their God for your God, and to give yourselves up to him in the bonds of his everlasting covenant. Remember then, that from this time, your language must be, What have we to do any more with idols? we have opened our mouths unto the Lord, and we cannot go back. Follow on then, to know the Lord, and you shall know him, and in due time reap, if you faint not.

But have all, to whom, this discourse is addressed, returned such an answer? Fain would I hope this to be the case; yet I cannot but fear, that some of them have not. I cannot but fear that some are still delaying a reply, and saying to the preacher as Felix did to Paul, Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. But my friends, I cannot depart without a direct and decided answer. Indeed, if you persist in delaying, I have one; for, in this case, to delay, is to refuse. Reflect then, a moment, before you persist in your determination to make a longer delay. Listen to the warning, which God has recently sent you in his providence, as if with a view to add weight and efficacy to the present discourse. Think of the young person whom death, a few weeks since, snatched away from among us. He was, like you, a child of the covenant; he felt the obligation which this privilege imposed upon him, and it is but a few months since you saw him, in this place, publicly ratifying the vows which his parents had previously made in his name. But suppose he had delayed to embrace Christ as you are now intending to do. A delay of only a few months would have been fatal to his ever-

lasting happiness; for he was deprived of his reason by the violence of disease, almost from the moment in which it arrested him. Had not sickness found him prepared, he must have died unprepared. So some of you may have but a few months to live, and delay may be everlasting death. And even should your lives be spared, delay may be equally fatal. God may, and he probably will, take from you his holy Spirit forever, and give you up to final hardness of heart, as he did the Jews. Remember the Jews at Antioch. When Paul offered them salvation and they delayed to accept it, he said to them, It was necessary that the gospel should first be preached to you; but since ye put it from you, and count yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles; for so hath the Lord commanded. My friends, if God commanded his apostle to turn from the children of the covenant, when they rejected his offer, will he not turn from you, if you do the same? Most certainly he will. Beware then, lest there be among you any profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright; for ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, and found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

My friends, if you, through fear of losing your worldly pleasures, refuse to embrace the Saviour now, you will, like Esau, sell your birthright; and if you do, it will be too late to repent; you will find no place for repentance, though you should carefully and tearfully seek it. But why should I multiply words? I have fulfilled my commission. It was necessary, first, to offer Christ to you, and I have done it. I repeat the offer. I once more assure you, that to you first God sends his Son to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities. Will you then persist in rejecting him, or, what is the same thing, in delaying to accept his offer? If so, your doom is sealed. You have bid farewell, a long, an eternal farewell to God, to Christ, to his church, to your religious friends, to happiness. Your blood be upon you, I am clear. From henceforth I turn to others; to those who have not been dedicated to God.

It was my duty, my friends, first to offer Christ to others. This duty I have discharged, and am now at liberty to make the same offer to you. Your heavenly Father, is more careful for your happiness than even your earthly parents. They re-

fused or neglected to give you to him in your infancy, but he has provided a Saviour, through whom you may present yourselves to him and be accepted. The Gentiles accepted Christ, when the children of the covenant rejected him. Will you then imitate their example. Will you give yourselves to that God, whom the children of the covenant neglect? Will you accept the privileges which they despise? If so, the blessing of Abraham will come upon you and your families, as it has on thousands of the Gentiles; and God will make with you an everlasting covenant, as he did with him, to be a God to you. To those of you, who are parents then, this subject is peculiarly interesting. It shows you the reason, why your children are not admitted to the ordinance of baptism. It is because they are not children of the covenant, and they are not children of the covenant, because you have refused to take hold on that covenant, which God offers to make with you. His language to you has long been, Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your souls shall live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David. But it is evident, that the parent, who will not make a covenant with God for himself, cannot covenant for his children. If he will not give himself to God, he cannot in sincerity give them to God. If he has no faith himself, he cannot present them in faith, and without faith nothing can be done acceptably. But no sooner does a parent become a believer in Christ, and embrace him as the mediator of the new covenant, than he is enabled and entitled to present his children to God through Christ, and claim for them covenanted blessings. This we find was the case under the ancient dispensation. No sooner did one of the Gentiles become a proselyte to the true religion, and receive the seal of the covenant, than his posterity became entitled to share in all the privileges which were enjoyed by the Jews; and to receive the seal of circumcision. It was the same under the New Testament dispensation. When a Jew or a Gentile embraced Christ by faith, not only he, but his household, were baptized, as we see in the case of the jailor, of Lydia, and Stephanus; but never do we find an instance, in which the children of any but professed believers were admitted either to circumcision or to baptism on their parents' account. This then, if you love your children, affords an addi-

tional reason why you should, without delay, embrace the Saviour, that you may present them to him for his blessing, and thus render them the children of the covenant. They themselves, if they were acquainted with their best interests, would entreat and beseech you, as soon as they could speak, to dedicate yourselves to God, that you might thus be prepared and entitled to present them.

This subject is also highly interesting to those parents, who are professed believers. I need not tell you, that no promised blessing can become ours, unless it be received by faith; or that without faith it is impossible to please God. It is by faith alone, that we can take hold on the covenant for ourselves; and it is only by faith that we can dedicate our children to God in such a manner, as to be accepted, and obtain for them the most precious blessings of the covenant. But real believers do not always exercise faith, no, not even when they present their children to God. They too often suffer themselves to fall into a cold backsliding state, and then the dedication of their children becomes a mere formality. In addition to this, many professors awfully neglect to fulfil their vows by which they have publicly and solemnly bound themselves to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. By this negligence, they do, in effect, throw themselves out of the covenant, at least so far as their children are concerned. So did not Abraham. I know him, says Jehovah, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. Here the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham, is made to depend upon Abraham's performance of the essential duties of the covenant. It is the same at the present day. If you, my professing friends, forget your covenant engagements, God will forget his promises; he will not give the blessings of the covenant to your children.

SERMON LXXV.

DUTY OF THE PRESENT, TO THE COMING GENERATION.

One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.—PSALM CXLV. 4.

IN bringing into existence angels and men,—the only orders of intelligent creatures with which we are acquainted,—the all-wise Creator saw fit to adopt two very different methods of proceeding. The angels, we have reason to believe, were all created at the same time, and in the full maturity of their intellectual powers. But men are brought into existence successively; and a small part only of the whole race inhabit this world at the same period. One generation gives birth to another, and then passes off the stage of life, to give place to its descendants. From the mode which God has thus adopted of bringing mankind into existence in successive generations, many most important consequences result.

Of these consequences one is, that they all originally possess the same moral nature; for it seems to be an established law, and universal so far as this world is concerned, that every thing which is productive shall produce its own likeness. Again; in the mode of bringing mankind into existence, all the natural relations which subsist among them have their origin. No similar relations, it is evident, can subsist among angelic beings. Among them the titles of parent, child, brother, and other names

expressive of relationship, are not known. Once more; from the mode of bringing mankind into existence, which God has adopted, result most of the social and relative duties which he requires them to perform. Of these duties one of the most important is described in our text. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

This passage may be understood either as a prediction, or as a command. On the present occasion I shall consider it as a command. Viewed in this light, it prescribes a most important duty to each of the successive generations of mankind; of course, to the present generation, as well as to those which shall follow it. To show in what the duty consists, and to state some reasons why it should be performed, is my design in the present discourse.

With this view I remark, that the duty here enjoined consists of two parts. The first is, to declare, or make known the works of God to succeeding generations, and especially, to that generation which immediately follows us. In other words, it is to inform them what God has done, and what he is now doing. This, it is obvious, embraces a wide field of instruction; for the works of God are both numerous and various.

1. They include his works of creation. These, therefore, we must make known to the generation which follows us. We must declare to them the fact, that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, with all which they contain; that, when nothing existed besides himself, — worlds, angels, men and animals came into being at his command. They include,

2. His works of providence. These, therefore, must be made known to the succeeding generation. They must be taught that, in a mysterious, but most powerful and efficacious manner, God preserves and governs every thing which he has made; that all events, from the greatest to the most minute, are under his control; and that what men call the laws of nature are only fixed modes of operation which he has adopted. Their attention must be particularly directed to those great dispensations of providence which respect our whole race; to those which are recorded in the Scriptures; to those of which their country has been the scene or the object; and to those which more immediately affect themselves. In short, they must be taught to

see God's hand in every thing, to view him as the source of all temporal blessings, and the great agent who worketh all in all.

3. God's works include the work of redemption, considered as a whole, together with all those gracious dispensations which are parts of it. This is the great work of works,—the work with reference to which all God's other works are performed. In this work every individual of every generation is deeply interested; and, therefore, this work especially should be made known to all. To make known this work, is to make known all that God has ever done for the salvation of our ruined race, so far as he has revealed it to us. It includes all the preparations which have been made for the coming of Christ; his coming itself, the work which he performed and the sufferings which he endured while on earth, and what he has done since he ascended to heaven. It includes also the revelation which God has given us in the Scriptures; for this is one of his works, though men were employed in effecting it. They wrote, but he dictated. They held the pen, but he moved it. Such are the works of God which one generation should make known to another; and a very little reflection will convince us that, in making known all these works, the whole system of religious truth and duty will be made known; for there is no doctrine, no precept of Christianity, which is not either founded upon some of God's works, or intimately connected with them.

But how, it may be asked, are these works of God to be communicated by one generation to another? I answer,—they are to be communicated, generally speaking, just as a knowledge of other things is communicated by one generation to another. Observation teaches us, that all the knowledge of temporal things which one generation possesses, is usually imparted to the next. This is done in various ways. Parents teach their children, if they are able; and if not, they employ other persons to teach them those things which are necessary to qualify them for active life. Colleges, academies, and schools are founded, and their support provided for, either by the civil powers, or by the munificence of private individuals, on purpose to impart instruction to the rising generation. A great part of the knowledge which every generation possesses is also recorded in books, and thus transmitted to posterity. And we may add,

that much useful knowledge is every day imparted casually in conversation, in carrying on the common business of life. Now in all these ways one generation ought to communicate to another a knowledge of the works of God. Parents who possess this knowledge,—and every parent ought to possess it,—must impart it to their children. All who are employed in the instruction of youth should impart it to their pupils. A competent number of well-qualified religious teachers should be provided. Seminaries, if necessary, should be founded and supported for the education of such teachers. All who are qualified to instruct mankind by their writings, should communicate religious knowledge through the medium of the press; and those who are not thus qualified, should embrace every opportunity of imparting it in conversation. In one or another of these various ways, all the religious knowledge which is possessed by one generation must be transmitted to the generation which follows it. This constitutes the first part of the duty enjoined in the text.

The second part is, for one generation to praise God's works to another. While they communicate a knowledge of his works they must speak highly of them. While they tell what he has done, they must add, he has done all things well. When they describe his works of creation, they must extol the wisdom, power and goodness which are displayed in them. While they communicate a knowledge of his works of providence, they must applaud them as infinitely wise, holy, just, and good. And while they exhibit the wonders of redemption, and God's works of grace to the following generation, they must accompany the exhibition with those glowing expressions of admiration, gratitude, love and joy, which this grand display of all God's perfections ought to call forth from those, for whose benefit it was made, and whose everlasting happiness it is designed to promote. In short, the high praises of God must be seduously poured into the ears of the rising generation; all the praise which has come down to us from former generations, or which has resounded from heaven to earth, must be echoed back to them; they must never hear him spoken of, but in just, that is, most exalted terms. They must be convinced that we regard him with the utmost admiration, reverence, gratitude, and love; and be made, if possible, to feel that among the gods there is none like Jehovah, nor any works like his works.

Such is the duty which every generation of mankind is commanded to perform with respect to the generation which immediately follows it.

Should it be thought by any, that the passage under consideration does not enjoin this duty; that it is simply a prediction and not a command; other passages can be easily adduced, in which the duty is explicitly enjoined. The church of God is represented as saying, We will not hide what our fathers have told us, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works which he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, and declare them to their children. In this passage the duty of transmitting the knowledge and the praises of God's works from one generation to another, is surely prescribed and enjoined as clearly as language can do it.

Having shown in what the duty consists, I proceed, as was proposed,

II. To state some reasons which should induce us to perform it.

1. One reason may be found in the natural relations which exist between the present and the next generation. These relations are intimate and endearing. The next generation will owe its existence to the present. They will be our descendants, our children. Even those of us who are related to none of them as parents, will be related to them in some other way. In short, there is probably not one individual present, who will have none that are related to him in the next generation. Now in consequence of the relations which exist between this generation and the next, we are its natural guardians, instructors, and guides. To us the education of their bodies, their minds, and their hearts, are entrusted. They have a natural right to look to us for instruction, and to expect that we should teach them every thing which it is necessary for them to know. And is it not necessary that they should know their Creator, their God, the being on whom they depend? Is it not necessary that they should know the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, whom to know is eternal life? Is it not necessary that they should have that knowledge which makes men wise unto salvation?

Again: the rising generation look to us for instruction respecting the real value of objects. In regard to these they are liable to be deceived. They cannot readily distinguish between appearances and reality, between food and poison. They need, and they have a claim to, the benefit of our knowledge and experience. They expect that we will speak to them in high terms of that which is most valuable; that we shall teach them to admire what is most admirable, and to pursue what is most worthy of pursuit. And is there any thing more admirable than the works and perfections of God; any thing more valuable, or more worthy of pursuit, than his favor? We ought then to praise him in their hearing, to speak of him in the highest terms; and to show them by our conduct that our praises are sincere. If we fail to do this, we sin against the relations which we sustain. If he who provides not for his own, especially for those of his own household, is worse than an infidel; what shall be said of him, who communicates to his own children, no knowledge of God, and teaches them neither by precept nor by example to praise him!

2. Another reason for the performance of this duty may be found in the fact, that each of the successive generations of mankind is the natural and rightful heir of the generation which preceded it. This is the appointment of God, the sovereign proprietor of all things. He has granted to each generation of mankind a life-estate only in their temporal possessions; and when the period, for which this grant was made, terminates, their possessions must go to the next generation. The present generation, for instance, can hold their lands, houses, goods, and privileges during life only; and when they pass off the stage, all these things will become the property of the next generation. Since then that generation are, by God's appointment, our natural and rightful heirs; since they will inherit all our other possessions,—it seems right and proper that they should inherit our knowledge of God and of his works. And since we cannot bequeath this knowledge by a will or testament, as we can our other possessions; since all which we do not communicate, while living, will be buried with us and lost forever; it seems necessary that we should impart it while life continues; and also make suitable provision for its preservation and increase. Every one who believes the Scriptures, and indeed every one who

believes that men are accountable, will acknowledge that it would be cruel to transmit our temporal possessions to posterity, and yet withhold from them that religious knowledge, which alone can teach them how to use these possessions, and prevent them from becoming a snare and a curse, as they certainly will if not employed in a right manner. Would not he be thought greatly deficient, either in prudence or in affection, who should bequeath to his children a magazine of gunpowder, or a quantity of virulent poison, and yet leave them in ignorance how to use it in such a manner as would be safe to themselves and others? My hearers, to bequeath a large portion of wealth, or of worldly knowledge, or of any other temporal possession to posterity, without imparting to them a knowledge of God, and of their duty, and their accountability, is worse than to bequeath them poison without cautioning them how they use it. How many have we seen ruined, both for this world and the next, in consequence of inheriting from their parents a large estate, without being taught how to use it, or to know that they must account for it! On the other hand, he who bequeaths posterity the knowledge and the praises of God, bequeaths a rich inheritance, even should he leave them nothing else.

3. The obligation to perform this duty will appear still more evident, if we recollect that for the religious knowledge and the means of acquiring it, which we possess, we are indebted, under God, to preceding generations. From them we received the Bible, that grand, inexhaustible depository of religious truth. From them we have received numberless other volumes, designed to explain and enforce its contents. From them we receive all the oral religious instruction which was imparted to us in our early years. To them we are indebted for our religious institutions, for a large proportion of our religious teachers, and for most of the colleges and other seminaries in which men are educated for the teacher's office. And all these blessings they imparted to us, on purpose that we might transmit them to posterity. It was their design, as it is the will of God, that we should do this. Our religious knowledge and privileges may, therefore, be considered as a kind of entailed estate; or an estate which we have no right to alienate, and which we are under obligation to transmit, unimpaired, to posterity. And can any of you wish, or even consent, to disregard these obligations?

Can you consent that the life-giving streams of that knowledge which makes men wise unto salvation, and which have flowed down from former generations to the present, should here stop, and proceed no further? Can you consent that at the last day, these streams should be traced down to us, and there be found to have disappeared, like a river lost among sands? Can you consent that your descendants should perish for thirst, and through eternity curse you as the cause? Shall they have reason to say, religious knowledge was transmitted and increased until it reached our fathers, but with them it was lost? Let those especially, who were blessed with pious parents, and with early religious instruction, think of these questions. Let them recollect, that they have incurred a debt, which they can discharge only by communicating to the next generation the instruction which they have received from the last. And let all my hearers remember, that there is no country on the face of the globe, in which these remarks should have such weight, as in New England. In no country are the present generation so deeply indebted to their ancestors as in this. O, what a birthright, what an inheritance did the fathers of New England bequeath to their posterity! Their knowledge of God, and their disposition to praise him have long since carried them to heaven; but they have left these blessings to us, that we may be taught and persuaded to follow them. And shall we disappoint their hopes and frustrate their endeavors? Most men are unwilling that an estate which has been for ages in their family shall go out of it. Shall we not then be unwilling that the religion of our fathers, and the blessings connected with it, should go out of the family? Shall we not, instead of selling our birthright, like profane Esau, say with Naboth, God forbid that I should part with the inheritance of my fathers! God forbid that I should fail to transmit to posterity the rich legacy which has descended to me.

4. A still more powerful reason why we should perform this duty, may be found in the fact, that we transmit to our posterity a corrupt and depraved nature, which, unless its influence is counteracted by religion, will render them miserable here and hereafter. It is in vain to deny or conceal the fact. The Scriptures assert it in the plainest terms, and universal observation and experience confirm the assertion. Every generation of man-

kind is an exact counterpart of the generation which preceded it; and exhibits the same moral image, the same sinful propensities, the same disposition to neglect and disobey God. Man was, indeed, first planted a noble vine; but he fell, and in consequence of his fall, men are now the degenerate plants of a strange vine. Nor are the human form and the human countenance more certainly transmitted by them to their posterity, than is a depraved and corrupt nature. Those of you who are parents, and who know any thing of your own hearts, see in your children an exact moral resemblance of yourselves. You are at no loss to determine whence they derive those sinful passions and propensities which they exhibit; you see, full blown in your own hearts, all those evils, the seeds of which you discover in them. Thus from one generation to another the poisonous streams flow down, diffusing moral contagion and death, and threatening to engulf the whole race in remediless sinfulness, wretchedness, and despair. It is no part of my present design to prove the justice of that constitution, which establishes a connection between the moral nature of parents and that of their offspring. That constitution is one of God's works, one of those works which we are required not only to make known, but to praise. Of course, it must be just. But it is more to my present purpose to call your attention to the means which God has graciously appointed for the remedy and prevention of those evils, under which the successive generations of mankind have so long groaned. These means are a faithful performance of the duty enjoined in our text. And we have reason to believe, that if this duty were faithfully and universally attended to, it would be sufficient. Let all the individuals of any one generation acquire the knowledge of God, and exercise those feelings towards his character and his works, which are expressed in praise; and then let them communicate this knowledge and express these feelings to all the individuals of the next generation; and the tide of corruption which now overflows the world would, in a great measure at least, be stopped. I do not mean that any generation, even if every member of it were pious, could convert the next; but I believe, and the Scriptures warrant the belief, that if one generation should faithfully perform its duty, God would bless its exertions and answer its prayers, by rendering the next generation almost universally pious.

And then that generation, in its turn, would perform the same duty to the next, with similar success; and thus the knowledge and praises of God would flow down from generation to generation, and fill the earth, even as the waters fill the seas. If any doubt this, let me request them to suppose that all the present inhabitants of this town should become judicious, well-informed, and zealous Christians; that they should all exemplify Christianity in their temper and conduct; that every practice and amusement inconsistent with pure religion should be banished; that they should all take as much pains to educate children for the other world, as they do to educate them for this; that children should never hear God or his works mentioned, but with admiration, gratitude, and love, and be taught from infancy that religion is the one thing needful; I say, suppose this to be the case, and can you doubt that all, or nearly all, the next generation in this town would become Christians; and in their turn act the same part to the generation which should follow them? If so, how much more probable is it, that similar consequences would follow, should all the inhabitants of this country, or of the world do the same? If any still doubt, let them think of such passages as these: Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. I know him, says God of Abraham,—that he will command his children and his household after him. And what will be the consequence? They shall keep the way of the Lord. Such language more than intimates, that, if one generation should perform its duty to the next, the next generation would be pious. In the millennium it will be so. Men will then be born, as they are now, with a corrupt nature; but the effects of it will, through the blessing of God, be prevented by the pious education which they will receive, and the pious examples which will be every where set before them. They will see that all who are older and wiser than themselves do know, and love and praise God, and value his favor more than life; and the same proneness to imitate others, which now leads them astray, will then lead them to seek the good and right way.

And now, parents, let me beseech you to think seriously of this. You have imparted to your children your own corrupt nature. That unwillingness to retain God in your knowledge, that aversion to his service, that dislike of religion, that strong

propensity to pursue this world and neglect the other, which, you cannot but be conscious, exist in yourselves, you have transmitted to them. And in consequence of these evils which they have derived from you, they will perish forever, unless these evils be counteracted. But God has in mercy put into your hands means to counteract them. Make known to them his works and his will. Pour into their ears his praises. Let them see, that you think of nothing, care for nothing, fear nothing, and love nothing, as you do him. Let them see that you care, comparatively, very little what their situation is in this world, provided they receive a Christian's portion in the world to come. Do this, and add fervent persevering prayer; and the corrupt nature which they have derived from you shall be changed by God's grace, a new heart and a right spirit shall be given them, and they shall be thus prepared to perform the same good office for their children, which you have performed for them.

Should it be thought by any, that though the remarks which have been made prove the propriety and necessity of communicating to the next generation a knowledge of God's works,—they do not prove it to be necessary that we should praise him in their hearing; I answer, the former without the latter will be of little, if any, avail. It will answer very little purpose to communicate knowledge of any object to the rising generation, unless they see that we highly prize the object itself, and consider a knowledge of it as exceedingly valuable. It must be evident to every person of observation, that children and youth, in forming their estimate of different objects, are guided almost entirely by the opinions of those who precede them in the journey of life. A child, left to itself, would prefer the smallest coin to a bank note, and a piece of painted glass to the most valuable diamond. And how does he learn to judge more correctly? Simply by observing how objects are valued by those who are older and wiser than himself. In this way, young persons, and even children, soon learn what we think most valuable. And however diligently we may impart to them a knowledge of God and his works, if we do not appear to think highly of him, to love his character, to admire his works, and to prefer him to every other object,—our instructions will have but very little effect. But if they hear us frequently speak of him in the glowing language of gratitude, love, and praise; if they see that

we consider him as all in all; that we regard it as detestable and base to neglect him; and that the language of our conduct is, Whom have we in heaven but thee, and what is there on earth that we desire besides thee?—they will, in all probability, be insensibly led to adopt, not only our opinions respecting him, but our feelings towards him. The just, but trite remark, that if we would speak to the heart, we must speak from the heart, is especially true with respect to children and youth. Perhaps one reason why many parents, who are careful to give their children religious instruction, see very little good effect result from their labors, is they do not with sufficient frequency and fervency speak to them in praise of God; do not appear to overflow with those emotions which praise expresses; but merely speak of him in a dry, cold, and formal manner. But to say nothing of parental efforts, how great, probably, would be the effect upon the rising generation, were they accustomed from their childhood to hear our rulers, our legislators, our judges, our officers, our wise, our learned and wealthy men, all speak of God and of his works in the highest terms, and utter his praises with emotion! if they never heard his name profaned or religion treated with disrespect! How would such examples tend to subdue their sinful prejudices, and tear down their opposition to the truth! To speak God's praises to the rising generation is then, if possible, even more important than to impart to them a knowledge of his works. Both, however, are necessary, and should never be separated.

It would be easy to enlarge on this subject, and to multiply reasons in favor of the duty before us, to an indefinite extent; but the undesigned length of the preceding remarks, renders it necessary to close with a brief improvement.

1. Is it the duty of the present generation to communicate a knowledge of God's works, and to proclaim his praises to the generation which will succeed us? Then it is incumbent on all to qualify themselves for the performance of this duty. It is incumbent on all to acquire a competent portion of religious knowledge, and to exercise those devotional feelings, which are expressed in praise. The man who does not know God, and who cannot cordially praise his character and his works, is totally unqualified to discharge one of the most important duties, which his Maker requires of him and which he is placed in

this world to perform. He is qualified neither to live usefully nor to die happily. My hearers, is not this the character of some of you? Are there not some before me, who know too little of God and his works, to impart a knowledge of either to the rising generation? Are there not a still greater number, who cannot cordially praise the works of God—nay, who are dissatisfied with many of his works, who complain of his law, neglect his gospel, and murmur at the dispensations of his providence? And how can such persons declare God's praises to the next generation? Or what can they teach it, but to neglect him, disobey him, and complain of him? Surely, no such person ought to be a parent, or an instructor of youth. Surely no such person is fit to educate immortal souls.

2. Is it the duty of one generation to declare and praise God's works to another? Then it becomes us all to inquire how far we have performed this duty to the generation which is to succeed us. Let me then ask every one who has reached the age of manhood,—what have you done to impart religious knowledge to the minds, and call forth the praises of God from the hearts, of the rising generation? There are, I know, many present who can reply, We have done something for the promotion of these objects. There are parents who have, in some measure at least, performed this duty to their children. There are some present who have imparted religious instruction to their apprentices, servants, and dependants:—some who have voluntarily labored in our Sabbath schools, to impart this knowledge to children with whom they are not naturally connected, and to call forth from their lips the high praises of God; and some who have contributed to diffuse this knowledge to the ends of the earth. But is there one present, who can truly say, I have done all that was in my power? I have done every thing which I was able to do for the rising generation in my own country, and in other parts of the world; for, be it remembered, the rising generation in other countries, in pagan, Jewish, and Mahomedan lands, have claims upon us, commensurate with our ability. In this, as in other respects, charity begins at home, but it must not end there. And is there one parent present, who can truly say, I have done every thing which I could do for the religious education of my own children? And are there not many, who have done comparatively nothing for any part of the rising

generation, even for the instruction of their own families in religious truths? Are there not some present who, if they were to die this day, would leave behind them no mind upon which they had made the least salutary impression—the slightest proof, that they knew and praised God themselves, or that they had ever taught others to do it? Nay more—are there not some who, as far as they have taught any thing to the rising generation, have taught them to neglect religion, to dishonor God, perhaps to take his name in vain? My hearers, let me beseech you to think seriously of these questions and of the subjects which led to them. If there be any who have performed no part of the duty enjoined in our text, let them immediately begin to perform it. Let those who have already done something, be excited to do more. Let it be remembered, that there is probably not now in New England one half the religion, in proportion to the number of inhabitants, that there was a century and a half since. If our posterity are not to become pagans or infidels, not only something, but much must be done.

3. Is it the duty of this generation to make known God's works and proclaim his praises to the next? Then it is the duty of the rising generation to receive with eagerness the religious instruction which is afforded them, and to drink in the praises of God. Remember, my young friends, we shall soon pass off the stage, and you will take our places. Then a new generation will spring up, whom it will be your duty to instruct. Now is the time to qualify yourselves for the performance of that duty. Now then acquire a knowledge of God and of his works. Now learn to love, admire, and praise him, that you may teach those who will come after you to do the same. Do this; and after you have, like ancient worthies, served God and your generation, you will rest from your labors, your works will follow you, and future generations shall rise up and call you blessed.

Finally. What a happy, glorious world will this be, when our text, considered as a command, shall be universally obeyed; considered as a prediction, shall be universally fulfilled! Whether we obey it or not, this will one day be the case. Then one generation will eagerly transmit the knowledge and praises of God to the next; while that generation will, with alacrity, receive and hand them down to their descendants. Then all shall know God from the eldest to the youngest, from the least to the great-

est. Then those things which are an abomination in the sight of God, shall no longer be highly esteemed among men; and the applauses which have been lavished, and the encomiums which have been bestowed upon heroes and conquerers, shall be transferred to the faithful soldiers and martyrs of Jesus Christ; while every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue shall confess him Lord to the glory of the Father. Then every day will be a day of thanksgiving; all nations, tongues, and languages shall join in one universal chorus of praise. Princes and subjects, young men and maidens, old men and children, shall conspire to swell the song. In one immense cloud of incense the grateful offering shall ascend the skies. Heaven shall hear with wonder and delight its own songs sung on earth; and God, the all good and almighty Father of the universe, bending from his eternal throne, shall accept the worship, smile with ineffable benignity and complacency on the worshippers, and shed down upon them, with unsparing hand, his richest blessings. Then death will indeed lose his sting, and cease to be the king of terrors. Easy and pleasant will be the passage from earth to heaven; and those who die will only pass from a world, filled with the glory and the high praises of God, to contemplate brighter glories, and join in louder praises in the world above. This is no poetic fiction, no sick man's dream, but sober truth. Let us all, then, exert ourselves to hasten this glorious consummation. It may not greet our own, or our children's eyes; but our children's children may witness it.

SERMON LXXVI.

ANGUISH OF PARENTS AT THE PERVERSENESS OF CHILDREN.

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!—2 Samuel xviii. 33.

With the character of Absalom, his unnatural rebellion, and his untimely, but merited fate, you are all I presume acquainted. You doubtless recollect, that, being defeated in a battle which he fought, with a view to dethrone his father David, he was entangled in his flight among the boughs of an oak, and there, suspended between the heavens and the earth, was slain by his pursuers. In our text, we have an account of the manner in which his father was affected, by the tidings of his death. He was much moved, and retired to his chamber weeping, and exclaiming as he went, O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

It cannot I think be doubted, at least no pious parent will doubt, that the grief which David felt on this occasion, was caused principally, though not solely, by an apprehension that his son was unprepared for death, and that of course his soul was lost forever. He knew what had been his character and conduct; he knew that he was suddenly cut off in the midst of his sins, with little or no opportunity for repentance; and he

knew, for he tells us in one of his psalms, that all the wicked, and all that forget God, shall be turned into hell. He could not, therefore, but greatly fear, or rather feel almost certain, that this was the portion of his son.

It is probable, also, that the anguish occasioned by this heart-rending thought, was aggravated by the reflection, that in consequence of having neglected to restrain and correct his son, in early life, he had been indirectly the occasion of his ruin. Hence his bitter cries; hence especially his wish that he had died in his son's stead. He was himself prepared for death; and, therefore, it would have been to him a comparatively trifling evil, and he hoped, that, had Absalom lived, he might have repented of his sins, and become prepared for death. Now, all such hopes were blasted at once, and forever.

My hearers, there are two classes of persons in this assembly, to whom some reflections on the subject before us may be profitable. They may be so to the irreligious children of pious parents; and to pious parents themselves.

I. I would call to this subject the attention of every sinner present, who has a pious parent, or parents, still living. I wish to show such persons how much anguish they occasion their parents, by neglecting to prepare for death. Of this anguish such persons think, because they know, very little. It is desirable that they should know more of it because this knowledge may lead them to serious reflection, and perhaps to repentance.

Permit me then to remind those of you whom I am addressing, that the hearts, or feelings of all truly pious persons are very much alike. Every Christian parent in David's situation, would feel, in some measure, as David felt. Every Christian parent feels a similar concern for the souls, the eternal interests of his children. Your parents feel this concern for you. Consequently, your remaining in an irreligious state occasions them much unhappiness; for it is not only over a dead child that such parents weep. No, they are distressed for you now, while you are in the full enjoyment of health.

In the first place, they are distressed by apprehensions that you may be led astray by vicious companions, or become the slaves of some vicious habit, or embrace false and destructive sentiments respecting religion. They have cause to entertain such apprehensions. They have often seen the children of even

pious parents fall a prey to these evils; they have seen those who in their youth were amiable, correct, and full of respect for religion, afterwards become enslaved by dissipation, intemperance, and infidelity; they know that your hearts resemble theirs, and that you are exposed to similar temptations. How can they then but be distressed for you? It will be in vain to attempt to relieve their distress by assuring them that you will never forsake the path of rectitude. They know too well, how little human resolutions and promises are worth. They have witnessed the failure of the strongest resolutions, and they have reason to fear that yours will be broken in a similar manner. They know that there is but one being who can hold you up; but one Shepherd who can keep you from wandering, and to this Shepherd they cannot persuade you to come. They have, therefore, no security that you will not become the vilest of the vile. This being the case, their anxiety must be as great as the affection which they feel for you, and as their desire to see you happy. Were these however the only dangers to which you are exposed; were you not immortal, accountable creatures, the distress which your parents feel for you would be comparatively small.

But, in the second place, they are much more distressed by fears that you will perish forever. They believe what God has said respecting the future state of those who die in their sins. They know the terrors of the Lord. They know that unless you repent, you will perish. They know that unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God. They know that God is able to destroy both soul and body in hell, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; and that he will thus destroy you, should death come and find you unprepared. Knowing these things, and loving you as they do, how great must be their anguish! How must they feel when such reflections as these crowd into their minds: Perhaps this child, whom I have so often caressed and nourished, over whom I have so often wept, and for whom I have cared and labored so much, will continue an enemy of the God who made him; will live only to fill up the measure of his iniquities, and to treasure up wrath; then die unprepared, and be miserable forever. Hence they often think of you, and weep and pray for you, when you are quietly sleeping. Hence, the more careless and

thoughtless you appear, the greater is their anxiety. Hence they earnestly look and wait for some appearances of religious sensibility, notice all such appearances with delight, and feel the most painful disappointment when they vanish.

In short, could you know all the sorrows which your parents have suffered since your birth, you would find that a great part of them have been occasioned by anxiety for you, for your immortal interests; and that to the same cause is to be ascribed, a great part of their daily sorrows. You can in some measure conceive what would have been the feelings of Noah, when he saw the flood approaching, had one of his sons, in defiance of all warnings and entreaties, refused to believe its approach, and enter the ark. You can conceive how greatly it would have diminished the happiness which his own safety occasioned, to look from the windows of the ark, and see a child exposed to be swept away with an ungodly world. What then must be the feelings of your parents, how greatly must it diminish the joy which their own safety occasions, to see you out of Christ, of whom the ark was a type, and hourly exposed to the wrath, which, as a deluge, will come upon the world of the ungodly; to see that all their warnings and entreaties cannot persuade you to fly from this wrath.

The distress which you thus occasion them is further aggravated by the reflection, that if you perish, your doom will be peculiarly terrible. You have enjoyed peculiar privileges. You have been dedicated to God, you were early taught to know his will, you have often been entreated, admonished, and warned, you have enjoyed the benefits of religious example, and have been preserved from many temptations to which the children of irreligious parents are exposed. Now if notwithstanding all these privileges, you live and die without religion, how aggravated will be your guilt! — how terrible your condemnation! Yours will be the doom of one who knew his Lord's will and did it not, and who is therefore deservedly beaten with many stripes; and it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for you. All this, your parents well know, and they are sometimes almost afraid to address you on religious subjects, lest all their attempts to effect your salvation, should only serve, in consequence of your neglecting them, to aggravate your guilt and wretchedness.

In the third place, if you persist in neglecting religion, the distress which your parents now feel, may be raised to the highest pitch, by seeing you die without hope. Then they will feel as David felt, and wish like him that they could have died for you. Conceive if you can, what his feelings were. He probably recollected the joy which was occasioned by his son's birth, the delight with which the fond parents contemplated his uncommon beauty; the pleasure which they felt, when, with tottering steps he first ventured to pass from one to the other, and which was renewed when he began to lisp their names; the deep interest with which they had watched his progress from infancy up to manhood, and the hopes which they had often indulged that he would prove a comfort to them, in their old age. And now what was the end of all these pleasures and hopes? That son, the son of his affections, his joys, his hopes, endeared to him by all these tender recollections, was dead; and, what was ten thousand times worse, had died in his sins. His mangled body lay buried under a heap of stones, and his soul—O where was his immortal soul?—what was it even then suffering!

But this reflection was too terrible. As often as the agonized father's thoughts attempted to follow his son into the world of spirits, they were met and driven back by horrors of which he shuddered to think, but which he could not banish from his mind. He felt that he should never meet his son again, never—never. They were not only separated, but separated forever. And O how did the father's heart sicken with anguish, while these thoughts swiftly passed and repassed through his mind! And can any of you think, with calmness, of wringing your parents' hearts with such anguish? Yet such anguish they would feel, should they see you die unprepared. To see you die would be a sore trial to them, even though you should die the death of the righteous. It would be a trial under which they would need strong consolation. But this would be nothing, I may say rather, it would be transport, compared with the misery of seeing you die the death of the wicked; of seeing you, like him, driven away in your wickedness.

Will you then by continuing to neglect religion, prepare for that hour, the most painful hour which a parent's heart can know, this additional pang? Will you infuse new bitterness

into that cup, which is of itself sufficiently bitter? Do you reply, perhaps my parents will escape this trial by dying before me. True; but should it be so, your neglect of religion will give additional sharpness to their dying pangs. Could they leave you safe in the love of a Heavenly Father, they might leave you without a tear. But to leave you in such a world as this without a protector, to leave you in the broad road to destruction, in that road which leads directly away from the heaven to which they are going; to leave you uncertain whether you will ever follow them to glory,—O this will be painful indeed. Some present have already occasioned this pain to a dying parent. Yes, the last moments of that father, that mother, whom you still perhaps remember, at times with a sigh or a tear, were embittered by the thought that they left you without God in the world, and of course without hope. And O how much more would their last moments have been embittered, could they have foreseen that their dying counsels, prayers, and tears would produce no more effect upon you, and be so soon forgotten. Will you not from this time begin to cry, God of my parents, forgive me that I have neglected thee so long; forgive me that I have paid no more regard to the parting advice of those whom thou hast taken to thyself.

But to return to those whose parents are still living. You have heard a little, and words can tell but little, of the distress which you occasion your parents by neglecting religion. And now permit me to ask, will you continue to occasion them this distress? Will you expose them to the additional anguish of seeing you die, or of dying and leaving you without hope? Is this the only return which they deserve from you for all that they have done and suffered for your good? Will you compel them, after they have spent the day in laboring for your support, to retire at night, sorrowful, and almost broken-hearted, and water their pillow with tears? Are any so hardened as to reply, we do not wish our parents thus to distress themselves on our account; we see no occasion for all this anxiety. True, you do not see it, and for this very reason they are the more anxious. And as long as they love you, they cannot cease to be anxious. To wish them not to feel distressed on your account, is to wish them not to love you. Or will any reply, we see nothing in our parents' conduct which leads us to believe that we occasion

them so much unhappiness. Alas, they dare not tell you all their feelings, nor dare they speak to you on religious subjects as often as they wish, lest it should disgust and harden you. They are aware that you do not love such subjects, and that if they are pressed upon you too frequently, the effect may be hurtful, rather than salutary. Let me then beseech you to lay these things seriously to heart, and to rejoice your parents, to excite joy in heaven, and to save your own souls, by commencing immediately and sincerely a religious life. In pressing you to do this, I seem to myself to come armed with all the efficacy of a parent's numberless prayers. And O that the God at whose feet those prayers have been poured out, may render these considerations efficacious to your salvation, and save your parents from the anguish of seeing you die in despair, and from pouring forth fruitless wishes over your remains, that they had been permitted to die in your stead.

II. I proceed now, as was proposed, to press the subject upon the attention of pious parents; for such parents may learn from it many important truths. In the first place, you may learn from it that no parent, whose children are not all pious, can be certain that they will ever become so, or certain that he shall not be called to weep over some of them, wishing that he had died in their stead. Perhaps most religious parents, when distressed with apprehensions respecting the fate of their children, endeavor to quiet these apprehensions, by hoping that, sooner or later, they will become the subjects of conversion. And sometimes they seem to take it for granted that this will actually be the case. They know that many will perish, but none of their children are to be of that number. We readily allow that if parents are conscious of doing every thing in their power to promote the salvation of their children; if they educate them, watch over them, pray for them, as they ought, they may, with propriety hope, though they cannot be certain, that they will be converted. But perhaps those parents are most ready to indulge such hopes, who have the least right to entertain them; those I mean, who are most negligent of the souls of their children, and whose religion is in a declining state. The hopes which such parents entertain respecting the future conversion of their children, are of precisely the same nature, with the hope that every impenitent sinner entertains respecting himself. He hopes,

though he has no reason for such a hope, that if conversion be necessary, he shall, sometime or other, be converted. And so these parents hope that their children will be converted, though like the sinner, they neglect their duty. But let such parents look at David, and learn that not only good men, but men eminently good, may be called to weep in anguish over a child who has died impenitent. And if this is not sufficient to convince them, let them look at the children of Eli, who were wicked to a proverb; at the sons of Samuel who walked not in his ways, and at the many other instances, mentioned in Scripture, of emieneently pious parents whose children proved most abandoned characters. Surely, these instances, as well as daily observation, must convince all, that no parent can be certain that he shall not be called on to weep as David wept.

From this subject, Christian parents may learn, in the second place, the fatal consequences of neglecting their duty to their children. David, though a great man, was guilty of this neglect. It is said of Adonijah, another of his sons, that his father had not at any time displeased him, saying, why hast thou done so? and there seems to be abundant reason to believe that he indulged his other children in the same injudicious and sinful manner. Doubtless he prayed for them, and gave them religious instruction, but he did not restrain and reprove them as he ought to have done. Hence the foul sins which stained his family. Hence the conduct and fate of Absalom. While he indulged, he ruined him, and prepared bitterness for himself. See pious Eli, scourged in an equally terrible manner for the same fault. His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not, and therefore God says, I will judge his house forever, nor shall the iniquity of his house be purged by sacrifice or burnt-offering. Christian parents, think often of these instances; for they stand as a pillar of salt, to warn you not to neglect the duty which you owe to your children. Yet as it respects many, they seem to stand and warn almost in vain. A neglect of parental duties, or an injudicious manner of performing them, are among the most prevalent and threatening evils which are to be found among us. There is perhaps no evil which threatens more danger to the cause of religion, or to the church of God, and I may add, to the prosperity of our country. Unless the hearts of children shall be soon turned to their

parents, and the hearts of parents to their children, God will certainly come and smite the land with a curse. Do you ask, what is to be done? I answer, the root of the evil, I conceive, lies here. Christian parents do not pray sufficiently for wisdom and grace, to enable them to perform their duty. They pray indeed for these blessings, but they do not pray sufficiently. They feel that ministers ought to be men of prayer; but they do not consider that to educate a family is little if any less difficult, than to perform the duty of a minister. Nay, in some respects, it is more so; for many men have been useful ministers, and yet failed greatly as parents. Even David, though he has for centuries instructed the whole church of God by his writings, failed, you perceive, in this respect. Parents, then, who would avoid this failure, must not only pray, but pray frequently and fervently, for wisdom and grace from on high, as well as for a blessing on their endeavors. If this is neglected, all the anxiety and distress which you may feel for your children will be vain, and you may see them perish.

Can you bear the thought? Look at those of them who are yet infants or in the early part of childhood. See how they depend on you, how they cling to you, in how many engaging, endearing ways, they twine themselves around your hearts. And can you bear to think of their growing up to be vicious or abandoned, to fall a prey to dissipation, debauchery, and intemperance, to live without God, and die without hope, and to become fiends hereafter? In a word, can you bear to think of being in David's situation, when he heard of Absalom's death? If not, O awake seasonably, and exert yourselves diligently. Be assured that you will find it much less difficult and painful to perform your duty, than to bear the consequences of neglecting it. But perhaps religion is in a declining state in your own hearts, and therefore you have little faith or disposition to pray. And is it so? So you remember, it once was with David. He declined, at length he fell openly, and his fall was chastised by a declaration from Jehovah, that the sword should never depart from his house. In a similar manner, your religious declensions may be punished. You may be made to suffer in the persons of your children, and to feel that remorse which David felt, when in the ruin of his son, he saw the consequence of his own folly. Believe me, believe me, Christians, or rather, believe God, you

cannot become negligent in religion, without suffering for it; and if the thoughts of your own sufferings are not sufficient to rouse you, O think of your children, and be roused.

I shall conclude with a word to those parents who feel no concern for the conversion or for the souls of their children. Permit me to ask such parents, why they are thus unconcerned? Our Saviour was distressed for the Jews and wept over them. Paul felt great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart, for his unconverted countrymen. The Psalmist could say, I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; rivers of waters ran down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law. Yet you do not feel for your own children, as they felt even for strangers. And does not this prove conclusively that you do not resemble the Saviour and his disciples, that you have no particle of the spirit which glowed in their breasts? Yes, if any thing can prove this, if any thing can prove that you do not believe the Scriptures, it is your indifference respecting the spiritual, eternal interests of your children. While you feel thus unconcerned respecting their souls, it is evident that you cannot have learned the worth of your own, nor have taken any measures to secure its salvation. But surely, if children at any time, or in any place, need the counsels, example and prayers of pious parents, they need them at such a time, and in such a town, as this. You see what multitudes of children are here growing up. You see what courses many of our youth pursue, what a pitch of wickedness many of them have already reached. Yet you cannot even pray that your children may be preserved from such courses, and the reason is, you have never learned to pray for yourselves. O, then, if you love your own souls, or the souls of your children, learn to pray, that you may go before them in the path to heaven, and perhaps they will follow.

SERMON LXXVII.

THE GUILT AND CONSEQUENCES OF PARENTAL UNFAITHFULNESS.

For I have told him, that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever. — 1 Samuel iii. 13, 14.

These words compose a part of the first revelation which was made by God to his prophet Samuel. This eminent servant of Jehovah was directed to begin his ministry by denouncing God's judgments against a sin which, it seems, was but too common then, as it is now; the sin of neglecting the moral and religious education of children. It was this sin which drew down the most awful threatenings upon the house of Eli. Eli was in many respects an eminently good man; but, like many other good men, he was in this particular grossly deficient. His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. We may be ready to think this a small and very pardonable offence; but God thought otherwise, and he made Eli to know that he did so in a most awful manner. Behold the days come, said he, when I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart; and all the increase of thy

house shall die in the flower of their age. And as for thy two sons, they shall both die in one day. These awful threatenings, addressed to Eli, were farther confirmed by the ministry of Samuel. I have told Eli, that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. Therefore have I sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of his house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever.

It may perhaps appear strange to some of you, my friends, that we have chosen such a subject as this for a day of public fasting and prayer. But we are not without hopes that, before we have done with the subject, you will be convinced that we could not have chosen one more important, nor more suitable to the present occasion. We are assembled this day for the purpose of humbling ourselves before God, for our personal and national sins, and praying for public and private prosperity. Now I firmly believe, that no sin is more prevalent among us, more provoking to God, or more destructive of individual, domestic, and national happiness, than that to which we propose to call your attention. Could we trace the public and private evils, which infect our otherwise happy country, to their true source, I doubt not we should find that most of them proceed from a general neglect of the moral and religious education of children. And if our civil and religious institutions should ever be subverted; and this nation should share the fate of many other once flourishing nations of the earth, our destruction, like that of the house of Eli, will have been occasioned by this very sin; a sin, which is the parent of innumerable other sins, and which, consequently, directly tends to draw down upon those nations, among whom it prevails, the judgments of offended heaven. Surely, then, no subject can be more important, or more suited to the purposes for which we are now assembled. In farther discoursing on this subject, we propose to consider the sin mentioned in our text, the punishments denounced on those who are guilty of it, and the reasons why this sin is so provoking to God, as it evidently is.

I. We are to consider the sin here mentioned. Eli's sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. It is not said that he set them a bad example. It is evident, on the contrary, that his example was good. Nor is he accused of neglecting to

admonish them; for we are told that he reproved them in a very solemn and affectionate manner, and warned them of the danger of continuing to pursue vicious courses. In this respect he was much less culpable than many parents at the present day; for not a few set before their children an example positively bad; and still more entirely neglect to admonish and reprove them. But though Eli admonished, he did not restrain his children. He did not employ the authority with which he was clothed, as a parent, to prevent them from indulging their depraved inclinations. This is the only sin of which he is accused; and yet this was sufficient to bring guilt and misery upon himself, and entail ruin upon his posterity.

Of the same sin those parents are now guilty, who suffer their children to indulge, without restraint, those sinful propensities to which childhood and youth are but too subject; and which, when indulged, render them vile in the sight of God. Among the practices which thus render children vile, are a quarrelsome, malicious disposition, disregard to truth, excessive indulgence of their appetites, neglect of the Bible and religious institutions, profanation of the Sabbath, profane, scurrilous, or indecent language, wilful disobedience, associating with openly vicious company, taking the property of their neighbors, and idleness which naturally leads to every thing bad. From all these practices it is in the power of parents to restrain their children in a very considerable degree, if they employ the proper means; at least, it is in the power of all to make the attempt, and to persevere in it so long as children remain under the paternal roof; and those who neglect to do this, those who know, or who might know, that their children are beginning to practise any of these vices, without steadily and perseveringly using all proper exertions, to restrain and correct them, are guilty of the sin mentioned in the text. Nor will a few occasional reproofs and admonitions, given to children, free parents from the guilt of partaking in their sins. No, they must be restrained; restrained with a mild and prudent, but firm and steady hand; restrained early, while they may be formed to habits of submission, obedience, and diligence; and the reins of government must never, for a moment, be slackened, much less given up into their hands, as is too often the case. Nor will even this excuse those parents who neglect family religion, and the religious instruction of their

children, and who do not frequently pray for the blessing of heaven upon their endeavors. If we neglect our duty to our heavenly Father, we surely cannot wonder or complain, if he suffers our children to neglect their duty to us; nor, if we do not ask his blessing, have we any reason to complain should it be withheld. In this, as in all other cases, exertion without prayer, and prayer without exertion are equally vain. To sum up all in a word, every parent who is not as careful of the morals, as he is of the health of his children; every one who takes more care of the literary, than of the moral and religious education of his children, is certainly guilty of the sin mentioned in our text. How much more criminal, then, are those parents who set before their children an irreligious, or vicious example; who join with the great enemy of their peace in tempting them to sin, and thus, instead of restraining, inflame and strengthen their sinful propensities. The parent who starves or poisons his children, is innocent in the sight of God, compared with one who thus entices them into the path of ruin.

Having thus briefly considered the sin mentioned in our text, I proceed to notice,

II. The punishments denounced against those who are guilty of it. It will soon appear, that these punishments, like most of those with which God threatens mankind, are the natural consequences of the sin against which they are denounced.

In our text these punishments are denounced in a general way. I have told Eli, that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth. The particular judgments here alluded to, are described more at large in the preceding chapter, to which this passage evidently refers. God there declares to Eli,

1. That most of his posterity should die early, and that none of them should live to see old age. The increase of thy house, says he, shall die in the flower of their age, and there shall not be an old man in thine house forever. Now it is too evident to require proof, that the sin, of which Eli was guilty, naturally tends to produce the consequence which is here threatened as a punishment. When youth are permitted to make themselves vile, without restraint, they almost inevitably fall into courses which tend to undermine their constitutions, and shorten their days. It is indeed a well known fact that, in populous towns,

comparatively few live to become aged, and that a much larger proportion of mankind, especially of the male sex who are most exposed to the influence of temptation, die in the flower or meridian of their days, than in the country where parental discipline is less generally neglected, and youth are under greater restraints. If parents wished that their sons should drag out a short life of debility and disease, and die before they reach half the common age of man, they could not adopt measures better calculated to produce this effect, than, to cast loose the reins of parental authority, and suffer them to follow their own inclinations, and associate with vicious companions without restraint. We may, therefore, consider the premature death of ungoverned children, as the natural consequence, as well as the usual punishment, of parental neglect.

2. In the second place, God declares to Eli, that such of his children as were spared should prove a grief and vexation, rather than a comfort to him. The man of thine, whom I shall not cut off, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart. How terribly this threatening was fulfilled in the case of Eli, you need not be told. Nor was it less terribly fulfilled in the family of David. Though he was in many respects an eminently good man, yet with respect to the government of his children he was grossly deficient. We are told respecting one of his children, that his father had not displeased him at any time, saying, Wherefore hast thou done so? We may then conclude that he was equally culpable in his treatment of his other children. And what was the consequence? One of his sons committed incest with his sister, and was in revenge barbarously murdered in cool blood by his brother Absalom. This same Absalom afterwards rebelled against his father, compelled him to fly for his life, and was cut off in the flower of his age, and in the midst of his sins. A third son rebelled against him in his old age, and endeavered to wrest the sceptre from his feeble hands. How keen were the sufferings which this conduct of his children occasioned, we may infer from his bitter lamentation on account of the death of Absalom. O, my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee, my son, my son! Well therefore might it be said of him that his children were to consume his eyes, and to grieve his heart. The fact is, this part of the threatened punishment, like the former, is the nat-

ural and almost inevitable consequence of the sin, against which it is denounced. If parents indulge their children in infancy and childhood, and do not restrain them when they make themselves vile, it is almost impossible that they should not pursue courses and contract habits, which will render them as bitterness to their fathers, and a sorrow of heart to those that bore them. If such parents are pious, their hearts will probably be grieved, and their eyes consumed with tears, to see their children rebelling against God and plunging into eternal ruin. If they are not pious, and care nothing for the future happiness of their children, they will still probably have the grief of seeing them idle, dissolute, undutiful, bad husbands, bad fathers, and bad members of society; for it can scarcely be expected that he, who is a bad son, will act his part well in any other relation of life. Especially will such parents usually meet with unkindness and neglect from their children, if they live to be dependent on them in their old age. It is in this, as in almost every other instance, the case that, as a man sows, so he must reap. They that sow the seeds of vice in the minds of their children, or who suffer them to be sown by others, and to grow without restraint, will almost invariably be compelled to reap, and to eat with many tears the bitter harvest which those seeds tend to produce.

3. In the third place, God forewarns Eli, that his posterity should be poor and contemptible. They that despise me, says he, shall be lightly esteemed; and it shall come to pass that every one that is left in thy house shall come and crouch to another for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread. Here again we see the natural consequences of Eli's sin in its punishment. Children who are not well instructed and restrained by their parents, will almost inevitably in such a place as this, contract habits of idleness, instability, and extravagance, which naturally lead to poverty and contempt. Were we well acquainted with the private history of those individuals among us, who are idle, intemperate, unstable and despised, we should probably find that in almost every instance, they were the children of parents who neglected to restrain them when they made themselves vile.

Lastly; God declares that none of the methods thus appointed to obtain the pardon of sin, should avail to procure pardon

for the iniquity of his house; I have sworn unto Eli, that the iniquity of his house shall not be purged away by sacrifice nor offering forever. This awful threatening conveyed a plain intimation that his children should die in their sins; and, of course be miserable forever. This too was the natural consequence of his conduct. He had suffered them to follow without restraint those courses which rendered them unfit for heaven, until their day of grace was past, and the door of mercy forever closed against them. They were now given up to a hard heart and reprobate mind. They could not now be brought to repentance; and, of course, no sacrifice or offering could purge away their sins. My friends, it is still the same, and there can be no room to doubt, that there are thousands now in the regions of despair, and thousands more on their way to join them, who will forever curse their parents, as the authors of their misery.

My friends, the terrible punishments denounced against this sin sufficiently show that it is exceedingly displeasing in the sight of God. Let us then inquire as was proposed,

II. Why it is so? To this we answer, it is so,

1. Because it proceeds from very wicked and hateful principles. Actions take their character in the sight of God principally from the motives and dispositions in which they originate. Now there is scarcely any sin which proceeds from worse principles and more hateful dispositions than this. For instance, sometimes it proceeds from the love and the practice of vice. Openly vicious and profligate parents, who do not restrain themselves, cannot, of course, but be ashamed to restrain their children. Such parents, whatever their children may do, dare not reprove them, lest they should hear them reply, Physician, heal thyself. In other instances, this sin is occasioned by secret impiety and infidelity. Those who live without God in the world, who think his power of no consequence, and feel not the force of those motives, which the Scriptures present to us, will be disposed to view the sins of their children with a favorable eye, and consider them as merely the common foibles of youth, which require little censure or restraint, and which they will renounce voluntarily. Even if such parents sometimes restrain the grosser vices of their children, they will give them no religious instruction; they will never pray for them, for they never pray for themselves; and without religious instruction

and prayer, little or nothing effectual can be done. But in religious parents, this sin almost invariably proceeds from indolence and selfishness. They love their own ease too well to employ that constant care and exertion, which are necessary to restrain their children, and educate them as they ought. They cannot bear to correct them, or put them to pain; not because they love their children, but because they love themselves, and are unwilling to endure the pain of inflicting punishment, and of seeing their children suffer; though they cannot but be sensible, that their happiness requires it.

There is also much unbelief, much contempt of God, and much positive disobedience in this sin. Parents are as expressly and as frequently commanded to restrain, to correct, and instruct their children, as to perform any other duty whatever. Great promises are made to the performance of this duty; awful threatenings are denounced against the neglect of it. Yet all these motives prove ineffectual. The commands are disobeyed, the promises and threatenings are disbelieved and disregarded, and thus parents honor their children more than God, and seek their own ease rather than his pleasure, as Eli is said to have done. It appears, then, that this sin proceeds from open wickedness, which renders parents ashamed to restrain their children; or from impiety and infidelity, which causes them to think it needless; or from indolence and selfishness, which make them unwilling to do it. Now these are some of the worst principles of our depraved nature; and therefore we need not wonder that a sin, which proceeds from such sources, is exceedingly displeasing to God.

2. This sin is exceedingly displeasing to God, because, so far as it prevails, it entirely frustrates his design in establishing the family state. We are taught, that he at first formed one man and one woman, and united them in marriage, that he might seek a Godly seed. But this important design is entirely frustrated by those parents who neglect the moral and religious education of their children; and therefore God cannot but be greatly displeased with a sin which renders his benevolent measures for our happiness unavailing.

3. God is greatly displeased with this sin on account of the good which it prevents, and the infinite evil which it produces. He has taught us, that children properly educated will be good

and happy, both here and hereafter. He has also taught us that children, whose education is neglected, will probably be temporally and eternally miserable. At least, it will not be owing to their parents, if they are not. He also compels us to learn from observation and experience, that innumerable evils and miseries do evidently result from this sin; that the happiness of families is destroyed; that the peace of society is disturbed; that the prosperity of nations is subverted, and that immortal souls are ruined by its effects. Now the anger of God against any sin, is in proportion to the evils and the misery which it tends to produce. But it is evident that no sin tends to produce more evils, or greater misery than this. It is the fruitful parent of thousands of other sins, and entails ruin upon our descendants to the third and fourth generation. With no sin, therefore, has God more reason to be angry than with this.

Lastly; this sin is exceedingly displeasing to him, because those who are guilty of it break over the most powerful restraints, and act a most unnatural part. He knew that it would not be safe to entrust such creatures as we are with the education of immortal souls, unless we had powerful inducements to be faithful to the trust. He, therefore, implanted in the hearts of parents a strong and tender affection for their offspring, and a most ardent desire for their happiness, that they might thus be induced to educate them as they ought. But those who neglect to restrain their children, do violence to this powerful operative principle, and may be said to be like the heathen, without natural affection. It is true they may have a kind of blind fondness for their offspring, like that of the irrational animals; but it does not at all resemble a virtuous, enlightened affection, and is altogether unworthy of a rational, and still more of a Christian parent; and, therefore, instead of prompting them to seek the real happiness of their children, it is but too often made an excuse for neglecting it.

Thus, my friends, have we endeavored to describe the sin mentioned in our text, with its punishment, and the reasons why it is so exceedingly displeasing to God. And now let us improve the subject,

1. By inquiring whether the sin does not greatly prevail among ourselves. But inquiry is needless. It most evidently does. I am inclined to believe that it is the greatest and most

provoking sin among us. And, my friends, you must allow that the speaker has had sufficient opportunity to form something of a correct opinion on this subject. He has resided in this place three years as an instructor of youth, and almost nine years as a preacher of the gospel. In this capacity he has had free access to families of every class, in all circumstances, and he has had very considerable opportunities of witnessing the manner in which children are treated; he has felt disposed to avail himself of these opportunities, and he is constrained to declare thus publicly, that he has found but comparatively few families in which there is not a gross and evident neglect of the moral and religious education of children. He has but too often witnessed in his parochial visits attempts to restrain children, while he was present; attempts, which were evidently unusual, and which were of course unsuccessful, and which only proved that the children, and not the parents, ruled. But it is needless to mention these circumstances. Our streets, and the vicious conduct of but too many of our youth are open witnesses against many among us, that their sons make themselves vile and they restrain them not. You well know that it is almost impossible to walk our streets, without having the ear wounded by profane and indecent expressions from lips which have but just learned to speak. You need not be told, at least many of you need not, that there are many haunts of intemperance and every kind of wickedness in this town, to which boys resort to learn and practice the vices of men; where they soon learn to glory in their shame, and to get rid betimes of the troublesome restraints and reproaches of conscience. You need not be told, that our annual days of fasting are, by many of the young, considered and treated as days set apart for sinful and almost riotous amusement, and that the language of their conduct seems to be, We are determined to fill up the measure of our national sins, as fast as our parents empty it. In fact, I suspect that there is more sin committed on our days of fasting, than on almost any other day of the year. But it is needless to enlarge. My very soul sickens to think of the dreadful proofs of youthful wickedness and profligacy, which I almost daily hear or witness. Surely, if it be true, that a child trained up in the way he should go will not depart from it, but few, very few indeed of the rising generation are thus trained. I would not, however, be

understood to mean, that all, or even a large proportion of the vicious children in this town are the children of this society. I do not now particularly recollect any one that is so. But, my friends, are there not many, even among us, who are grossly deficient in this respect, many whose sons make themselves vile, many who suffer their children to associate with vile companions and they restrain them not? Are there not many, who have already suffered some of the punishments with which the house of Eli was visited? Are there none, who have reason to fear that their children were cut off by an untimely death, the consequence, at least in some degree, of a neglected education? Are there none, whose children survive only to consume their eyes and grieve their hearts by their misconduct, and cause them bitterly to lament the consequences of their neglect now, when it is too late to repair it? It is indescribably painful to tear open the bleeding wounds of such parents, if such there are; but it must be done, if it be only to bring them to repentance and the enjoyment of pardon. It seems that if any sin calls for repentance, this especially does; and it becomes all of us, who are parents, to humble ourselves before God for our innumerable deficiencies, and to beg that he will not visit our sins upon our children. It may perhaps be too late with many to reform now. The children have become too old to be controlled; they have left the paternal roof, and perhaps gone to the world of spirits. The mischief is done and cannot be remedied. My friends, if any thing can convince you of the need of an atonement, it must be this. Suppose a parent, by neglect or by bad example, has ruined his children; they die in their sins, and go to the judgment seat. After their death, suppose their criminal parent is brought to repentance, what can clear him from guilt? what can wash away his sin? He has destroyed an immortal soul, the soul of his own child; a soul which God committed to his care, and of which he will demand an account. Now what account can such a parent render? What atonement can he make to God for destroying one of his creatures? to that God who declares that he will require blood for blood, life for life, of every one who unlawfully takes away the life of a fellow creature? Will his tears, his repentance restore the dead to life, or save the soul which he has ruined? No; nor would it avail should he offer thousands of rams, or

ten thousands of rivers of oil; for God expressly declared that the sin of Eli's house should not be purged with offering nor sacrifice forever. What then can take away the guilt, and procure the pardon of such a parent? Is there any way, or must he perish? There is a way. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and surely such a parent needs it all, nor could any thing short of this precious atoning blood, make satisfaction for this irreparable mischief which his neglect has occasioned. If then there be any present, who are guilty of this sin, any, who fear that by their bad example, or their neglect, they have occasioned the ruin of an immortal soul, we would point them to Christ for relief and pardon. By his blood even those who have destroyed others may themselves be saved from destruction, if their repentance be sincere; for he has declared that all manner of sin and blasphemy, not committed against the Holy Ghost, shall be forgiven to the penitent. But if any, who are guilty of this sin, do not repent and apply to the Saviour for pardon, the oath of God stands against them, that their iniquity shall not be purged forever. My friends, let all who are parents think of this, and beware of this ruinous, this aggravated, this almost unpardonable sin. Chasten thy son, says the wise man, while there is yet hope, nor let thy soul spare for his crying; for he that spareth correction hateth his son, but he that loveth him will chasten him betimes. Thou shalt scourge him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

2. If there are any children or youth now present, whose parents do not restrain them, and who make themselves vile by indulging in vicious or sinful practices, they may learn from this subject, what will be their fate, unless repentance prevent. Children and youth, I am now speaking to you. You are deeply interested in this subject. Remember the character and the fate of Eli's sons. They made themselves vile, and God slew them. Remember that a quarrelsome temper, disobedience to parents, idleness, neglect of the Sabbath, and the Bible, profane and indecent language, falsehood, and every kind of vicious indulgence, render you vile in the sight of God, and are the high road to poverty and contempt in this world, and everlasting wretchedness in the next. Remember too that, if your parents do not forbid, and punish you for these sins, that will not excuse you in the sight of God. Eli did not restrain his sons, and yet

God destroyed them. But if any of you, who have religious parents, pursue such courses in defiance of their admonitions, your doom will be still worse. There is no more certain forerunner of ruin in this world and the next, than habitual disregard to the counsels and warnings of such parents. We are told that Eli's sons hearkened not to their father, because the Lord would slay them; and if any children present refuse to obey their parents, it gives reason to fear that God intends, in like manner, to destroy them.

SERMON LXXVIII.

THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS VISITED UPON THEIR CHILDREN.

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation.—Exodus xxxiv. 7.

In this passage we have a part of the name of Jehovah, as proclaimed by himself. In the preceding chapter we find Moses praying for a manifestation of those attributes in which the divine glory essentially consists. I beseech thee, said he, show me thy glory. This request God answered by saying, I will make all my goodness to pass before thee; and will proclaim before thee the name of the Lord. This promise he fulfilled. The Lord, says the inspired penman, descended in a cloud, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; and by no means clearing the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation. On hearing this adorable name, thus proclaimed, Moses made haste, and bowed his head, and worshipped; thus expressing his cordial acquiescence in all that God had revealed respecting his character, and the maxims of his government. Every one who possesses the temper of Moses, will feel disposed, on hearing

this name, to follow his example. But it is more than probable that all present do not possess his temper; and that some, on hearing that part of God's name which has been read as our text, will rather feel disposed to ask, how can it be just, how can it be made to appear consistent with our ideas of perfect rectitude, for God to visit the iniquity of men upon their posterity; or, as the expression evidently means, to punish children, and children's children, for the sins of their parents? To answer these questions by stating the true import of the passage, and showing that the method of proceeding, which it describes, is perfectly just, is my design in the present discourse.

With this view, I remark,

1. That this passage has no reference whatsoever, to God's treatment of mankind, in a future state. It does not mean that God will punish children in a future state for the sins of their parents; but the visitation or punishment which it threatens, is exclusively temporal. This is evident from a passage in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, when God, speaking of the death to which his law dooms transgressors, says, The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. In another passage, he says, The fathers shall not die for their children, neither shall the children die for the fathers; but every man shall die for his own sin. The same truth is clearly taught in the many passages which assure us, that, at the judgment day, God will reward every man according to his works. Not, you will observe, according to the works of his parents, but according to his own works; nor is the smallest intimation to be found in the Bible, that, in dispensing eternal rewards and punishments, God will pay any regard to the conduct of a man's ancestors, whatever it may have been. I remark,

2. That God never visits children even with temporal judgments for the sins of their parents, unless they imitate, and thus justify their parents' offences. This, he himself declares, in the most positive and unequivocal manner. The impious Jews, while suffering the just punishment of their own offences, made use of this proverb; The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge; that is, our fathers have sinned, and we, their children, are punished for it. They thus justified themselves by insinuating that the calamities which

they suffered were not the consequence of their own conduct, and at the same time, accused God of injustice. The ways of the Lord, said they, are not equal, or equitable. For this impious and groundless complaint, God severely reproves them, declares that they shall no more use this proverb, and shows, in the clearest manner, that they had no cause to use it. He assures these murmurers that, if a wicked man has a son who seeth all his father's sins, and considereth and doeth them not, but executeth God's judgments, and walketh in his statutes, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, but shall surely live. With this assurance, the divine conduct, as described in the Old Testament, corresponds. Hezekiah, Josiah, and many other pious men were the children of exceedingly wicked parents; but as they shunned the sins of their fathers, and were supremely devoted to God, they enjoyed his favor in a very high degree, and were visited with no marks of displeasure on account of their progenitors.

There is, however, one apparent exception to these remarks, which must be noticed. It is evident from facts, that even pious children often suffer in consequence of the wicked conduct of their parents. If a father be idle, or extravagant; if he squander his property by gaming, or intemperance, or destroy his reputation by scandalous crimes, or ruin his constitution by sensual indulgences; his children, and perhaps his children's children, may suffer in consequence; nor will any degree of piety always shield them from such sufferings. Those sufferings ought not, however, to be considered as punishments inflicted by God; but merely as the natural consequences of their parents' misconduct; and even these consequences, though painful, will be overruled for their benefit; for all things work together for good to them that love God. It must, however, be added, that the sinful example and conduct of wicked parents has a most powerful tendency to prevent their children from becoming pious, to induce them to pursue vicious courses, and thus to bring upon them divine judgments. Such parents seldom, if ever, give their children good advice, or a religious education, but suffer them to grow up, almost without restraint, with a bad example in its most influential form, ever before their eyes. Hence, wickedness often descends in families from generation to generation, becoming more deep and inveterate as

it descends, till long delayed vengeance overtakes the guilty race, and blots their very name from the earth. I remark,

3. That our text describes God's method of proceeding with nations, and civil or ecclesiastical communities, rather than with individuals. I do not say that it has *no* reference to individuals, but that it refers principally to nations, states and churches. It seems designed to teach us that God often visits one generation with national judgments, on account of the sins of preceding generations; or in other words, that in punishing a nation, at one period of its existence, he has respect to sins of which it had been guilty during former periods. For instance, when he doomed the Canaanites to destruction, he had respect not only to the sins of that generation which was destroyed, but to all the sins of which the nation had been guilty, from the commencement of its political existence. This is evident from his informing Abraham that the Canaanites could not be immediately destroyed, because their iniquity was not then full; but that after four generations should have passed away, their measure would be full, and their destruction would be effected. In a similar manner he dealt with the Amalekites. That nation made a cruel, treacherous, and unprovoked assault upon the Israelites in the wilderness. God then declared that he would punish the nation of Amalek for that offence; but the punishment was deferred for some hundreds of years, and was then inflicted with awful severity; and the destruction of the Amalekites which then took place, was expressly stated to be on account of the sin committed so many years before, by a preceding generation.

By similar maxims God was governed, in his dealings with the Jews. The Babylonish captivity was designed as a punishment, not only for the sins of that generation, which was actually carried away, but for the sins of the preceding generation. And so the present dispersion of the Jews, with all the calamities which, for eighteen hundred years, have overwhelmed that devoted people, is a continued expression of the divine displeasure against the sin of which their fathers were guilty, in crucifying the Son of God, of whom they said, His blood be on us and on our children. Our Saviour himself said to that generation, by whom he was crucified, Fill ye up the measure of your fathers, that upon you may come all the righteous blood,

shed from the foundation of the world; from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. That we may perceive the justice, wisdom and propriety of this method of proceeding, it is necessary to consider the following things.

It is indispensably necessary to the perfection of God's moral government that it should extend to nations and communities, as well as to individuals. This, I conceive, is too evident to require proof; for how could God be considered as the moral governor of the world, if nations and communities were exempt from his government? Again, if God is to exercise a moral government, over nations and communities, by rewarding or punishing them according to their works, the rewards and punishments must evidently be dispensed, in this world; for nations and communities will not exist, as such, in the world to come. In that world, God must deal with men, considered simply as individuals. Further, it seems evidently proper, that communities as well as individuals, should have a time of trial and probation allowed them; that if the first generation prove sinful, the community should not be immediately destroyed, but that the punishment should be suspended, till it be seen whether the nation will prove incorrigible, or whether some succeeding generation will not repent of the national sins, and thus avert national judgments. Now it is evident, that if God thus waits upon nations, as he does upon individuals, and allows them a season of probation, a space for repentance, he cannot destroy them, until many generations of sinners are laid in their graves. Besides, by thus suspending the rod, or the sword over a nation, he presents to it powerful inducements to reform. He appeals to parental feelings, to men's affection for their posterity; and endeavors to deter them from sin, by the assurance that their posterity will suffer for it. In connection with these remarks, we must recollect, what has been already stated, that God never punishes a generation for the sins of its ancestors, unless it imitates their conduct, unless it is guilty of similar or more aggravated offences, and thus justifies the wicked conduct of preceding generations. Besides, as sinful nations, like individuals, if they do not reform, usually become worse, it will ever be found that the last days of a nation, are its worst days, and that the generation which is destroyed, is more abandoned than

all preceding generations. I will only add, that when God forsakes or destroys a nation, for its national sins, he does not inflict more upon that generation which is destroyed, than its own sins deserve, though he punishes them more severely than he would have done, were it not for the guilt which has been accumulated by the generations which have preceded it. From these statements and considerations, I conceive that not only the justice, but the wisdom and propriety of the divine proceedings, must appear evident to every calm and unprejudiced mind. If doubts respecting it still remain, permit me to attempt their removal by the following statement.

Suppose that from the commencement of our existence as a nation, some other nation had without provocation treated us in the most hostile and injurious manner, interrupting our commerce, murdering our fellow-citizens, and finally, forcibly seizing, and unjustly retaining a part of our territory. Suppose the generation by whom these acts of hostility were committed, to be all laid in their graves, and a new generation to succeed, who, instead of making any reparation for the injuries we had sustained from their fathers, should repeat the same injuries, and retain the territory which they had unjustly acquired: Should we not feel that we had just cause of complaint against this new generation; that they were, in effect, accessaries in the crimes of their fathers, and deserving of the punishment due to those crimes? And supposing war, in any case, to be just, should we not feel it just to make war upon that nation, at any succeeding period of its existence, so long as its offences were repeated, and the territory which it had unjustly acquired was retained? My hearers, God's visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, implies no more than is involved in this supposition. Who then will deny his method of proceeding to be just?

My hearers, the subject we have been considering, would, at any time, be interesting and instructive, but there is something in our present situation, which renders it, at this time, peculiarly so. As a community, we are just entering on a new mode of political existence. We are now separated from our parent State, and have no further concern in its sins or its virtues, except what results from our connection with it, as members of the Union. But though we have no other concern with the sins

of which it may hereafter be guilty, it is evident from our subject that we are still deeply interested in the sinfulness and guilt contracted by that State, during the period of our political connection with it. In that sinfulness we shared; in accumulating that guilt we assisted, and should God visit our parent State for its sins, we must expect to share in the visitation, unless previous repentance and reform prevent. Had the State, at the period of our separation, been burdened with a debt which it was unable to discharge, we must have been charged with our proportion of it; and the same remark will apply to the debt which is due to divine justice. It becomes us, then, to look back and inquire of what sins the State was guilty during our connection with it. With respect to the primitive fathers, or first settlers of the State, it was intimated in the morning, that they were, in a very uncommon degree, devoted to God. No other nation can boast of such ancestors, to no other nation has so small a share of guilt been transmitted by its founders. But it is too evident to require proof, that our immediate ancestor have sunk very far below the standard of their forefathers. The progress of those vices which principally tend to draw down divine judgments upon a people, has been constant, rapid, and highly alarming. Dissipation, intemperance, profanation of the Sabbath, neglect of divine institutions, and profane language have burst in upon us like an overwhelming flood. The prevalence of perjury, or false swearing, is, if possible, still more alarming. To say nothing of the little regard paid, in many cases, to oaths of office, how terribly have our commercial transactions, for some years, been polluted by this crime! Of what palpable perjuries have great numbers of our fellow-citizens been guilty, both at home and in foreign lands; and how largely have those who employed them, participated in the guilt! We may think little of this, and flatter ourselves that customary oaths are trifles; but be assured, my hearers, that when God is, on any occasion, called to bear witness to a transaction, he witnesses it; and wo be to the wretch who calls upon the God of truth to bear witness to a lie. God will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain; nor will he hold a nation or community guiltless in which this sin prevails. Even you, my hearers, would think it the greatest of insults should a man impudently call upon you to testify to the truth of a

known lie. With what feelings, then, must the God of truth hear himself so frequently called upon to bear such testimony?

But to return from what is, perhaps, a digression;—if these and other sins have grossly prevailed, in our parent State, and in this part of it, during the period of our political union, then, unless we repent of these sins; and much more, if we persist in them, we may be certain that God will, sooner or later, visit upon us the iniquity of our fathers. We shall commence our separate existence with our measure of iniquity partly filled, and our own sins will soon fill it to the brim.

In the second place, this subject will teach us not only to reflect upon the past, but to look forward to the future. If God in his dealings with civil communities, visits the sins of parents upon their children, then he will visit our sins upon our children. We shall suffer for them in the world to come, and they will suffer for them in this world. We often speak of acting for our posterity, of providing for their happiness; but in no way can we promote their happiness so effectually, as by abstaining from sin; in no way can we do more to destroy it, than by continuing in sin. We profess to have been actuated, partly at least, if not principally, by a concern for their interest, in seeking the separation which has taken place. But what will it avail for them to be a separate State, if we indirectly separate them from the favor and blessing of heaven? What will it avail to bequeath to them our civil and religious privileges, if the bequest, in consequence of our sins, is accompanied with heaven's curse? A measure of iniquity nearly full is a terrible inheritance to bequeath to posterity. Yet such an inheritance we shall certainly transmit to them, unless a more general reformation, than there seems any reason to expect, should prevent. May God have mercy upon our posterity, for I fear we shall have none.

In the third place, this subject may be interesting and instructive to many of us, not only as members of the community to which we belong, but as individuals. Are there any present, who are descended from a long line of irreligious ancestors; who can scarcely find, among their progenitors, one devoted servant of God? Surely, such have reason to tremble, lest a curse should be entailed upon a race, which has been so long estran-

ged from God. Are there any whose immediate ancestors have lived without God, in the world? Let such remember that if they would not be visited for the sins of their fathers, they must forsake their fathers' sinful ways. Are there any, who, while their parents remain strangers to God, have been led to know and serve him themselves? What reason have such to bless and adore the sovereign mercy, which, instead of leaving them under the load of derived and personal guilt, has visited them with salvation. Are there parents present, who know not God? It surely becomes them to lay this subject seriously to heart, lest they should treasure up wrath for their descendants. Let me entreat such parents to reflect how soothing, how delightful it must be to be able, in their expiring moments, to bequeath to their children, and their children's children, the blessing of a pious father; to be able, with dying Jacob, to say, The God of my fathers, the God who has fed me all my life long, the Angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless my children, and be their God. Surely, if there be a delightful spectacle on earth, it is that of a dying father, who after having guided his children in the way of peace by his principles and example, expires while the blessing which he bequeaths to them, trembles on his lips. On the other hand, what sight can be more dreadful than that of a dying sinner,—his own gloomy prospect rendered ten-fold more dismal by the reflection that his own children are involved for time, perhaps for eternity, in the consequences of his transgressions.

SERMON LXXIX.

AN EARLY INTEREST IN GOD'S MERCY ESSENTIAL TO A HAPPY LIFE.

O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. — PSALM XC. 14.

My hearers, should all the youth in this assembly express sincerely their secret wishes and inclinations, it can scarcely be doubted, that many of them would say something like this; I should wish to live a long life, to be allowed to spend it in worldly pleasures and pursuits, and then, just before its termination, to be converted, and prepared for death. Such, indeed, it is evident, must be the wishes of every person, who, while he is convinced that religion is necessary, does not love it; for while he does not love religion, while he regards a religious life as a life of unhappiness, he will, of course, wish to defer the commencement of such a life, as long as he can, consistently with his own safety. My youthful hearers, am I wrong in supposing that such are your wishes? Am I wrong in supposing, that if it were submitted to your choice, whether your conversion should take place now, or at the close of life, many, if not most of you, would choose the latter? If such would be your choice, your feelings evidently differ widely from those by which the pious writer of our text was actuated. He exclaims, O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

By the mercy of God is here evidently intended, his pardoning mercy. But God's pardoning mercy is extended, as the psalmist well knew, to none but the penitent, but those who have really commenced a religious life. And he knew that none can obtain such manifestations of this mercy as will satisfy them, except those who pursue a religious course with zeal and diligence. When he said, O satisfy us early with thy mercy, he did, therefore, in effect say, Incline us early to enter on a religious course of life, and to pursue it with such zeal and diligence, as shall afford us satisfactory evidence, that we are indeed the children of God, partakers of his mercy, and heirs of his salvation. The psalmist then, it appears, thought it highly desirable, that men should seek and obtain God's mercy; or, in other words, commence a religious course, in early life,—as early as possible. The reason which he assigns for the opinion is particularly worthy of remark. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; why? that we may be happy hereafter? No; but that we may live happily here; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. This language evidently and forcibly intimates, that if the young early seek and obtain God's pardoning mercy, the way will be prepared for them to rejoice and be glad all their days. And it intimates with equal clearness, that, if they do not early seek and obtain mercy, joy and gladness cannot attend them. Or, to express the same sentiments in different language, he who in early youth commences and diligently pursues, a religious course, will be happy through life; but he who does not, at that period, commence a religious life, will not live happily, even though he should subsequently become religious. That these intimations are perfectly accordant with truth; that every man who wishes to rejoice and be glad all his days, must early seek and obtain God's pardoning mercy, it is my present design to show. With this view I remark,

1. That a man may live happily, that he may rejoice and be glad all his days, it is necessary that he should be early freed from all fears of death. That a man who is subject to such fears, who regards with dread an event which is constantly approaching, to which he is every moment exposed, and from which it is impossible to escape, cannot be happy, it is needless to prove. But every man who has not sought and obtained God's pardoning mercy is, in a greater or less degree, subject to

such fears. Nor is this any proof of weakness. It is perfectly reasonable that he should entertain such fears, that he should regard death as an evil greatly to be dreaded; for, to such a man, it must be the greatest of all evils, since it will separate him forever from every thing which he values or loves. And the more prosperous he is, the more his honors, friends and possessions increase, the more reason he has to fear an event which will strip him of them all. O death, exclaims an apocryphal writer, how terrible are the thoughts of thee to a man who is at ease in his possessions. Indeed, could we look into the hearts of men, we should probably find that nothing so much embitters life to them, as apprehensions of death. And how is a sinner, who has no interest in God's mercy, to free himself from such apprehensions? Will it be said, he may refuse to think of death? I answer, he cannot always banish this subject from his thoughts in a world like this, where so many things occur which are suited to remind him of it. Scarcely a day passes in which he does not meet with something which forces upon him a conviction, that he is mortal; that he is constantly approaching the grave, and liable every moment to fall into it. But from this cause of unhappiness, the man who early obtains satisfactory evidence that he is a subject of God's pardoning mercy, is entirely free. The Saviour on whom he relies came on purpose to deliver those, who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage. This deliverance he grants to all who have obtained mercy of the Lord, and enables them triumphantly to exclaim, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory, through Jesus Christ my Redeemer. And O, what a cause of unhappiness, what an oppressive load is removed from a man's mind, when he can adopt this language, when he ceases to regard death as an evil to be dreaded!

2. That a man may rejoice and be glad all his days, it is necessary that he should be freed in early life from a guilty conscience, and from apprehensions of God's displeasure. That a man whose conscience troubles him cannot be happy, no one who has a conscience needs be informed. And that apprehensions of God's displeasure and of its terrible consequences, must render men unhappy, is equally obvious. The man who cannot be happy when alone, whose own thoughts are unpleasant com-

panions, who cannot look into his own breast without uneasiness, nor up to heaven without terror, nor toward the eternal world without apprehension, must surely be very far from deserving to be regarded as a happy man. If he ever enjoys any thing like happiness, it can be then only when he forgets that he is an immortal being, and that there is a God to whom he is accountable. But these things no unpardoned sinner can always forget. The recollection of them will return at intervals to disturb his peace; and if he has received much religious instruction, it will return often. The understanding and conscience of such a man cannot but be at war with the temper which he indulges, and with the course which he pursues. And even when they are not actually reproaching him, and when no distinct apprehensions of an offended God, of judgment and eternity press upon his mind, he often feels that indescribable uneasiness, restlessness and dissatisfaction, which are the almost inseparable attendants of all who are not at peace with God. Agreeably, we read that the wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; that they travail with pain all their days; that a dreadful sound is in their ears, that they believe not that they shall return out of darkness. But from these causes of unhappiness the man who is early satisfied with God's pardoning mercy, is free. He knows the blessedness of the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered. He enjoys peace of conscience and peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He knows that heaven regards with an approving eye the course which he pursues; that God is his friend, heaven his destined home, and everlasting glory and felicity his reward. Hence he can be happy in solitude: nay, in solitude his happiest hours are spent. He is not obliged to rush into company for the sake of escaping from his own thoughts. He is not obliged to walk with his face bent downward to the earth, lest he should catch a glimpse of that glorious sun which shines in heaven, and its brightness should pain his eye. No; he can look up to that sun, not only without pain, but with delight; for he rejoices with joy unspeakable, while contemplating its unsullied and unfading glories. Nor is he obliged carefully to confine his thoughts within the narrow circle around him, lest they should wander into the eternal world, and bring back cause of alarm. On the contrary, he

sends them forward with pleasure to visit that world; he fixes on it the eye of delighted contemplation, and anticipates the hour when he shall be permitted to enter it, for he regards it as the place where the objects of his supreme affections reside, and where his happiness is to be rendered perfect and complete. In a word, all those invisible and eternal realities, every thought which gives pain to the guilty, unpardoned sinner, are to him sources of happiness. And at the same time, he derives more pleasure from temporal blessings than they ever afford the sinner, because he tastes the goodness of God in them, and because his enjoyment of them is less embittered by fears that they will be taken away. Surely then the man who wishes to enjoy life, to rejoice and be glad all his days, should seek to be satisfied early with God's mercy.

3. To render a man happy during the whole progress of life, it is necessary that he should be early freed from care and anxiety, and especially from apprehensions of losing what he most loves. A feeling of safety, of security, is indispensably necessary to our happiness. But it is impossible that an unpardoned sinner should feel perfectly safe, or that he should be free from care, anxiety, and apprehension. He has no almighty friend, no father in heaven, on whom he can cast the burden of his cares. He cannot conceal from himself the fact, that he is every moment liable to lose all the objects which he values and loves, and he knows, that at death, if not before, he must be separated from them all. In fine, his treasure is laid up on earth, his habitation is built upon the ice, his friends are like himself, all frail, dying creatures; and he has nothing which he can with propriety call his own; nothing on which he can lay his hand and say, this object at least is safe. How then can he be free from anxiety and apprehension, and how while subject to these can he be happy? But from this cause of unhappiness the man who early obtains satisfactory evidence that he is interested in God's pardoning mercy is free. His treasure, his portion, his chief good, is laid up, not on earth but in heaven, and he knows that it is safe, that it cannot be lost. Nor has he any reason to be anxious respecting his temporal concerns, or his lot in life; for he knows that his portion is allotted, and all his concerns managed by unerring wisdom and goodness; that all things shall work together for his good, and that it is his privi-

lege and his duty to be careful for nothing, but to cast all his cares on that heavenly Father who careth for him. Hence he can say, The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Although the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be in the vine; the labor of the olive should fail and the fields should yield no meat; the flocks should be cut off from the fold. and there be no herd in the stall; yet I will joy in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. Nay, though the earth should be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waves thereof should roar and be troubled. and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, yet the Lord of hosts is with me, the God of Jacob is my refuge.

4. That a man may rejoice and be glad all his days, he must early learn, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content. A discontented man is, of course, an unhappy man. But it is impossible that an unconverted sinner should be otherwise than discontented. To exhort him to be contented is the most idle thing imaginable. As well might we exhort a thirsty man not to feel thirst, while nothing is given him to satisfy it. The reason is obvious. While the soul is empty it cannot but feel uneasy, dissatisfied, discontented. But so long as it is without God, the only fountain of living waters, the only being who can fill the soul, it must be empty. It will crave something, and pine after something, which it cannot find. The situation of a man without God, as it respects happiness, is like that of a man without the sun, as it respects light. The latter may surround himself with lamps, and thus provide a supply of artificial light; but his lamps will often burn dimly, and will sometimes be extinguished; and even while they burn most brightly, their pale, sickly light will afford but a poor substitute for the pure. reviving, all-disclosing radiance of the sun; a substitute with which the eye could not long be satisfied. Just so a man, who is without God in the world, may surround himself with friends and earthly possessions, and make the comfort which they afford a substitute for the consolation of God, and the enjoyment of his presence. But it is, at best, a miserable substitute, a substitute with which the soul cannot be contented. But far different is the situation of one who is satisfied early with God's mercy. What the sinner seeks in vain, he has found. The light which

sheds its radiance on his path, is furnished, not by lamps, but by the sun, a sun which never sets. The water which quenches his spirit flows, not from broken cisterns, but from the inexhaustible fountain of living waters. Of this water, our Saviour says, he that drinketh of it shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life. Such a man has then the sources of contentment in his own bosom. He carries them with him wherever he goes; and when we recollect that, in addition to this, he has been favored by the mercy of God with a submissive temper, we need not be surprised to hear that he soon learns in whatsover state he is, therewith to be content.

Finally. That a man may rejoice and be glad all his days, it is absolutely necessary that he should early obtain the mastery of his appetites and passions, and be secured against the evils into which they would lead him. What these evils are, it is scarcely necessary to say, since they prevail but too extensively among us. Look around, and you will see on every side young men, whom appetites and passions are plunging into intemperance, sensuality, and every species of vicious excess, and thus ruining them not only for the future, but for the present world. You see them forming habits, whose chains it will be exceedingly difficult for them to break, and which, unless broken, will drag them away to destruction. And no young man can have any security that he shall not be left to form such habits, unless he obtains that security which is afforded by God's sanctifying grace and pardoning mercy; unless he early commits himself to that great and good Shepherd, who has engaged to preserve all his sheep. Until this is done, he is at the mercy of every gust of temptation, every sudden sally of appetite and passion. It is in vain that, in his sober moments, he resolves not to yield to temptation. How little such resolutions, how little any human restraints avail to secure him, melancholy observation but too clearly shows. How many promising young men have we seen who, while they remained under the parental roof, were moral, correct, and apparently fortified against temptation; but when they were removed from it, fell an easy prey to temptation, and sunk into the arms of vicious indulgence! And how many have we seen who, after passing safely through the dangerous period of youth, became the wretched victims of intem-

perance in manhood. Presume not then, young man, upon thine own strength. Where so many others have fallen, thou mayest fall. Against such a fall thou canst have no security, until thou obtainest the protection of God. Let him hold thee up, and then, and then only, wilt thou be safe. This safety is enjoyed by all who are satisfied early with his mercy. They are taught and assisted by his grace to crucify their affections and lusts, to keep under appetite and passion and bring them into subjection. They have a powerful Saviour, a prevalent intercessor to pray for them, that their faith may not fail; they are within the protection of his encircling arm, and have often reason to say to him, When my foot slipped, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In a word, though they may possibly be left occasionally to fall into some particular sins, for their humiliation and chastisement, they are infallibly secured against the formation of any vicious habits, for the power and truth of God are pledged, that no sin shall have dominion over them. On their perseverance in a virtuous course, their friends may, therefore, safely rely; and it may be confidently expected that, in domestic and social life, they will be happy, and rejoice and be glad all their days.

Here we might conclude our remarks; but there is one more view, and to Christians a very interesting view, of the subject which it is necessary to take. It is necessary to inquire, how far the happiness of the Christian, after his conversion, may be affected by the period when his conversion took place. In other words, will a man, who is satisfied early with God's mercy, probably enjoy more uninterrupted religious happiness after his conversion, than a man who does not obtain mercy until a later period of life. It can scarcely, I conceive, be doubted that he will. A man who does not become religious, till the season of youth is passed away, must of course, spend all the early part of life in sin. And what will be the consequence? He will commit many sins, the recollection of which must be painful to him as long as he lives; he will lose much time and many precious opportunities of improvement, and of doing good, which he will afterwards regret; he will afford his sinful propensities an opportunity to become strong; and it will, of course, be more difficult to subdue them, and his future conflicts will be more severe. His imagination will be polluted, and the consequences will trouble him as long as he lives.

He will, probably, in some degree, at least, be a tempter of others, and the recollection of this will be bitter as wormwood and gall. He can never have the satisfaction of reflecting, that he gave God his first and earliest and best affections; that when the world was all fresh and gay and smiling around him, he cheerfully forsook all to follow Christ. On the contrary, it must pain him to reflect, that he did not forsake the world, till he had proved its emptiness; that he did not follow Christ, until experience taught him that there was nothing else worth following. We may add, that the man who is not converted until a late period, will more than probably, indulge in vices, or form habits, which will cause him much unhappiness through life. Nay more, it will not be at all strange, should he injure his health and undermine his constitution, and have nothing left to offer to God, but a diseased body, and an enfeebled mind. We find Job exclaiming, Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the sins of my youth, that is, to feel their bitter consequences. David also prays, that God would not remember against him the sins of his youth; an intimation that he either suffered, or feared, some evil on account of them. But all the evils which have now been enumerated are avoided by the man who commences a religious life in early youth. He is guilty of no vicious indulgences, he forms no bad habits, his affections are less entangled, and his imagination less polluted, and his future life will not be embittered by the recollection that he has tempted others to sin; that he has irrecoverably lost his best opportunities for improvement; or that he has injured his health or his reputation by the practice of vice. As he enters the narrow path early, he will probably make great progress in holiness, lay up much treasure in heaven, and be rich in good works. And he, and he alone, can say in his old age, O Lord, thou hast been my hope from my youth; now, when I am old and gray-headed, forsake me not. Is it not then, most evident, that he who enters on a religious course in early life, will enjoy more happiness than one who commences such a course at a later period? And is it not equally evident that, if a man would be glad and rejoice all his days, he should become religious in early youth? An application of the subject to several different classes in this assembly, will conclude the discourse.

1. Let me apply it to those among the young, who are de-

ferring the commencement of a religious life, because they suppose a late conversion to be more favorable to happiness. From the remarks which have been made, you may learn, my young friends, that you are laboring under a great mistake; that by delaying to seek and obtain mercy of the Lord, you are not only losing much present happiness, but exposing yourselves to many evils, and taking the most effectual way to render your whole future lives less happy. If you wish to rejoice and be glad all your days, you must, believe me, you must, commence a religious life without delay. If a man intended to cultivate a field, would it not be unwise to defer the commencement of his labors until the proper seed-time had passed away? If a man intended to become a scholar, would it not be unwise to spend his childhood and youth in idleness? Equally unwise is it for you to defer the commencement of a religious life till the season of youth is passed. It would be thus unwise, even could you be sure of being converted at any future period. But you cannot be sure of this. On the contrary, experience and observation combine with the Scriptures to teach us, that those who do not become religious in early life, will very probably never become religious at all. O, then, if you mean ever to hear God's voice, hear it to-day, and do not by delay harden your hearts.

2. Are there any in this assembly who were converted and satisfied with God's mercy in early life? If so, they may learn from this subject what cause they have for gratitude and joy. They who obtain mercy at any period of life have unspeakable cause for thankfulness. But none have so much reason for thankfulness as they who obtain it early. They can scarcely conceive how many evils and dangers and sufferings they have escaped by an early conversion. Let them then show their gratitude by improving diligently the long space which is afforded them to become rich in good works and make more than ordinary advances in religion. And let them consider how disgraceful it will be, if after spending a long life in the school of Christ, they should at last be found babes in knowledge and happiness.

3. From this subject those Christians who did not seek and obtain mercy in early life, may learn that they will have no reason to wonder or complain if they should continue to feel,

as long as they live, some of the evil consequences of their early neglect of religion, and of their youthful follies and sins. There are some evils of this kind which religion does not remove, and which it cannot be expected she should remove. Should a young man, while engaged in some vicious pursuit, lose a limb or an eye, and afterwards become religious, could it be expected that religion would restore the limb or the eye which he had lost? or would it be reasonable for him to complain on this account? And if a man wastes his childhood and youth in sin, and afterwards becomes a Christian, can he justly complain, though he should still suffer for his folly, though his sinful propensities and habits should give him more than ordinary trouble; or though he should make less progress and enjoy less happiness than he otherwise would? Certainly not. Let him ascribe all his sufferings to their true cause, let him trace them up to his early sins, and let him submissively say, The Lord exacts of me less than my iniquities deserve. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.

SERMON LXXX.

SIN AVOIDED BY CONSIDERATIONS OF GOD.

How can I — sin against God? — Genesis xxxix. 9.

This, my hearers, is the genuine language of a pious heart. It ought to be the language of every heart. To every tempter, to every temptation, our invariable reply should be, How can I sin against God! To persuade you to make this reply, whenever you are tempted to sin, is my present design. And perhaps I cannot prosecute this design more effectually, than by attempting to show you what is implied in the language which we wish you to adopt. This therefore I propose to do.

The meaning, the force of this language lies almost entirely in the word God. And O how many reasons, why we should not sin against him, are wrapped up in this one word! Could we, my hearers, make you see the full import of this word; could we pour upon your minds the overwhelming flood of meaning which it contains, you would feel, that no additional motives were necessary, to deter you from sinning against him whose name it is. But this we cannot do. Could we take this one word for our theme, and expatiate upon it through eternity, we should be able to tell you but a part, a small part, of its meaning. All we can do is, to tell you something of what it means, in the mind, in the mouth of a pious man. Suppose such a man placed before you. Suppose you see him assailed

and urged to sin, by every temptation to which human nature can be exposed. Suppose that on the one hand, the world holds up all her pleasures, riches and honors, and says to him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt consent to sin. And suppose that, on the other hand, she places before him poverty, imprisonment, contempt, torture, and death, and says, To all these evils I doom thee, if thou refuse to sin. Then hear him reply, How can I sin against God? and listen while he tells you what he means by this language. Notice his expressions; weigh well the reasons which he assigns, and see whether he does not act wisely, whether he does not constrain you to justify his conduct in refusing to yield to temptation and sin against God. And if you feel, as we proceed, that he completely justifies himself in the eye of reason, that he speaks and acts wisely, then make his language and his conduct your own.

1. God, you may understand the good man as saying, is a being of perfect, of infinite excellence. His works, as well as his word, assure me that he is so. They assure me that from him comes every good and perfect gift; that he is the Father of lights, the source of all the intellectual and moral excellence, which is possessed by creatures, whether in heaven, or on earth. Now there must be more in the fountain, than there is in all the streams which proceed from it. There must be more excellence in the Creator, than in all the creatures which he has formed. How then can I sin against him? There are many of my fellow creatures, who possess much intellectual and moral excellence, and whom I should therefore be unwilling to offend. And ought I not, then, I appeal to you whether I ought not, to be far more unwilling to offend him, who is the source of all excellence? who is excellence itself? Do you ask me to be more particular? I reply, God is holy. He is the thrice Holy One; he cannot look on sin, but with the deepest abhorrence. How then can I sin against him? How can I insult his spotless purity, by polluting myself with sin, when the light of his holiness shines around me? God is good, infinitely good, he is goodness itself. And O, how can I sin against goodness, infinite goodness? God is just, and his justice binds him to punish sin. He is Almighty, and his power enables him to punish it. I am unable to resist him, if I wished to do it. How can I, how dare I, then, offend him, and provoke his justice to employ his power in destroying

me? God is every where present, and knows all things. How then can I sin against him? How can I pollute by my sins a place which is made sacred, which is rendered holy ground, by his presence? God is infinitely wise. In his wisdom he counsels me not to sin; and how can I disregard the counsels of infinite wisdom? God is true; he is truth itself; he has told me that misery is the consequence of sin, and how can I disbelieve eternal truth? God is merciful and gracious. He has mercifully offered to forgive all my transgressions, great and numberless as they are. How can I then, if there is one spark of gratitude or ingenuousness in my heart, ever consent to offend him again? God is condescending. He has graciously condescended to feel and express an interest in my welfare, and in that of my fellow worms. And how can I then abuse his condescension? In fine, when I see that every thing glorious, excellent, and lovely is summed up in the character of one Being, how can I sin against that Being?

2. God is my Creator. He is the former of my body, the Father of my spirit. As such he is my nearest relative. How then can I sin against him? Look at this body. He contrived it. He formed every particle of it. He gave me these limbs, these senses. How then can I employ them in offending him? Consider my soul. He breathed it into me. He endowed it with all the faculties which it possesses. And can I suffer them to sin against him who gave them? Shall the thing formed rise up against him who formed it? I am not my own, I am the property of him who made me. Every thing which I possess is his. And how can I disregard his rights? How can I be so foolish, so ungrateful, so impious, as to sin against a Father; against such a Father, against him but for whom I had never existed? You would not justify me in offending an earthly parent. You would justly censure me, you would consider me as an unnatural wretch, should I plant thorns in the breast of a kind father, an affectionate mother. And ought you not much more to condemn me,—ought I not to abhor myself, should I offend and grieve my Father in heaven?

3. God is my Preserver and Benefactor. He has watched over me and preserved me, every moment since my existence commenced. He has shielded me from ten thousand evils and dangers. He has preserved me, while multitudes of my coevals

have perished. He is preserving me at this moment. How can I then, while in the very act of experiencing his preserving goodness, requite him with disobedience? And while he has been my constant preserver, he has in numberless other ways acted as my benefactor. All the happiness which I ever tasted, he imparted. All the blessings which I ever enjoyed, he gave. Each of them bore this inscription, The gift of God. The food which has nourished me, the garments which have clothed me, the habitation which has sheltered me, the relatives and friends whose kindness has cheered my existence; all come from him. And even now, it is his light which shines around me; it is his air which I breathe; the earth on which I stand is his; even now my hands are filled with blessings which he has bestowed. How then can I raise them against him? How can I requite with ingratitude this kind, constant, unwearied benefactor!

4. God is my rightful Sovereign. As my Creator and Proprietor, he has the best of all possible titles to control me. He, who gave and who preserves my existence, has surely a right to prescribe the manner in which I shall spend it. He who gave me my limbs and faculties has surely a right to say what I shall do with them. And he has exercised this right. He has enacted laws for the regulation of my conduct. These laws he has made known to me. And they forbid me to sin. They forbid this particular sin, which I am now urged to commit. And I see not how I can escape from the obligations which I am under to obey them. I see not how I can escape from the government of God, or cease to be his rightful subject. And while I am one of his subjects, I see not how I can disobey him, without becoming a rebel and a traitor, and thus exposing myself to his just displeasure. And how can I do this? How can I consent to become a rebel against the King of kings, the Sovereign of the universe? How can I dare brave the displeasure of Omnipotence, of one who governs all things by the word of his power? And why should I wish to do it? All his commands are holy and just and good. They require nothing of me which does not tend to secure my best interests, my everlasting happiness. They forbid nothing which would not debase and injure me. Why, then, should I transgress, how can I transgress such a law as this, when in doing it I sinned against the greatest and best of sovereigns?

5. God is the providential, as well as moral Governor of the universe, and the sole Dispenser of all blessings, natural and spiritual. As such I am constantly dependent on him for every thing which I need. I am in his hands; as he has given, so he can take away, all that I possess. He has only to speak the word, and all blessings forsake me, all evils come upon me; nor can all creatures united continue to me one blessing, which he sees fit to take away, or avert one evil which he commissions to assail me. How can I, then, unless I become a madman, consent to forfeit his favor and incur his displeasure, by sinning against him? Especially how can I do this, when I know that he is the Judge, as well as the Governor of the universe, and that, as such, he will summon me to his bar, and pronounce upon me a sentence, which will render me happy or miserable forever! I know he has power to execute this sentence. I know that he has power to destroy both soul and body in hell. And dare I, can I, then, offend him? Can I barter heaven for the temptation which now urges me to sin? Can I take the price of sin in my arms, and for the sake of it plunge into hell? Can all the rewards which you offer compensate me for the heaven, which I shall lose by sin? Are all the tortures, with which you threaten me, to be compared with those miseries, into which I shall sink myself by sin? You will not assert this. I cannot then,—O, no, no,—I cannot consent to sin against God. Ask me to do any thing else, however difficult or painful, and I will, if possible, comply; but ask me not to sin against God; ask me not to destroy body and soul forever, for this I cannot, cannot do.

6. God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. As such so he loved our ruined race, that he gave his only begotten Son to die for its salvation. He gave him to die for me, for my relatives, for my fellow creatures. He gave him to die for us, when we were sinners, rebels, enemies; gave him, that we might be saved from the consequences of our own follies and vices. Through his crucified Son, he has offered me pardon and peace and everlasting life, on the easy terms of renouncing my sins, and believing in him. Nay more, he has besought me to accept of salvation on these terms, and to be reconciled to himself. He has shown himself willing to receive and welcome me no less kindly, than the father in the parable received and welcomed his returning prodigal son. And the Saviour, by

consenting to die for us, has evinced love and condescension equally wonderful. He has done and suffered more for us than any earthly friend would or could have done. Now if I consent to sin, I shall crucify afresh this Saviour; I shall dishonor and offend and grieve the Father who gave him to die for me. And how can I do this? How can I requite him evil for good? Tell me, ye who urge me to sin, how can I so far divest myself of gratitude, of ingenuousness, of all sensibility to kindness as to be guilty of such conduct? Tell how I can ever justify myself, how I can ever prove that I am not a base ungrateful wretch, if I should consent to sin against my God and Redeemer, after they have done all this. But you cannot tell me. You can furnish me with no apology, with no shadow of an excuse for such ingratitude. Tempt me not then to be guilty of it, for I cannot, no, I cannot sin against the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, the God of all grace and mercy. I cannot grieve and crucify afresh that Saviour who has voluntarily expired for me on the cross.

Thus, my hearers, have I endeavored to show you something of what a good man means when he says, How can I sin against God; and stated some of the considerations which he may urge as reasons why he cannot consent to sin against him. And now let me ask, Are not these reasons more than sufficient to justify him in refusing to sin, however strongly he may be urged to it? Is there any thing in this language which indicates weakness, or superstition, or enthusiasm? Rather, does it not approve itself to the understanding and conscience of every person present, as being perfectly reasonable? Would you not censure and condemn him, should he consent to sin against God, when considerations so numerous and so powerful forbid it? If so, you must, would you be consistent, condemn yourselves whenever you sin; for, my hearers, every consideration which the good man has now been represented as urging to prove that he ought not to sin against God, may be urged with equal force to prove, that you ought not to sin against him. If the good man ought to adopt such language, then each of you ought to adopt it. If it is wise and proper that he should form such a determination; then, for the same reason, it is wise and proper that you should form it. And now to come to the great object of this discourse, let me ask, will you not adopt it? We set

before you God, the infinite, everlasting God; a being absolutely perfect, in whom all possible excellence is concentrated and condensed; a being who is your Creator, your Preserver, your Benefactor, your rightful Sovereign, your Judge; a being who has so loved you, that he spared not his own Son; but delivered him up for us all, and whose offers of grace and mercy are continually sounding in your ears. This Being we set before you and say, How can you sin against him? And what we wish of you is, that each of your hearts should echo, How can I sin against God?

Let me then repeat the question, Is this, shall it henceforth be, the language of your hearts? Perhaps some may reply, It is, it shall be their language. We will no more sin against God. If we ever sin, it shall only be against our fellow creatures, or against ourselves, not against him. But, my friends, all sin is against God. Though in some forms it may be more immediately against ourselves, or our fellow creatures, yet in every form it is ultimately against him. It is against his law, his authority, his government, his glory. It strikes at him directly in all these respects. To say that we will no more consent to sin against God is equivalent to saying, We will no more consent to sin at all. And saying this implies repentance; for the same views which lead a man to say, How can I sin against God? will lead him to repent of having already sinned against him. Besides, God's first command is, Repent. To disobey this command is, therefore a sin. Of course, he who says, How can I sin against God? will say, How can I defer repentance a single hour? All the considerations which ought to have prevented him from sinning against God, will now operate to make him repent of his sins. He will say, Against this infinitely perfect Being, against infinite wisdom and power and holiness and justice and goodness and mercy and truth, I have sinned. Against my Creator, and Preserver and Benefactor, I have sinned. Against my Sovereign and Judge, against the mighty Monarch of the universe, against the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, against my adorable crucified Saviour, I have sinned. And O, how could I do this? What cruel ingratitude, what impious folly and madness, possessed me! I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. And he who says this, will also believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He will see

that unbelief is one of the greatest sins which can be committed against God; that it calls in question all his perfections, and represents him as wholly unworthy of confidence. How then, he will ask, can I any longer persist in it? Besides, he will see that he needs such a Saviour as Jesus Christ, to save him from the consequences of sins which he has already committed against God, and from those sinful propensities which urge him to sin afresh. This will operate as an additional reason why he should believe without delay. Having exercised repentance and faith in Christ, he will proceed to exhibit the effects of both, by denying himself, crucifying his sinful propensities, and replying to every temptation; How can I sin against God?

And now, my hearers, if any of you mean to adopt the language of our text, you will soon have occasion to make use of it. As soon as you leave this house, and through the remainder of the week, you will be assailed by temptations from within and without, to sin against God. Those of you, who have hitherto neglected religion, will be tempted to neglect it a little longer. And those of you, who have professedly embraced it, will be tempted to act in a manner inconsistent with your profession. The situation of both classes will be this. On one side, a thousand little tempters of various kinds will be whispering, Do consent to sin against God. Sin against him at least in this one thing. It will be a trifling offence, and you can repent of it afterwards, and be forgiven. On the other side, God will stand in all his infinite perfections, in all his endearing relations, and with the tenderness of a father, with the authority of a master, with the majesty of a universal monarch, will say, Yield not to these temptations; sin not against me. Then you will be called to weigh the rights, the claims of Jehovah against the pleadings of temptation. Then you must either adopt, or reject, the language of our text. Now then, while temptation is at a distance, while the voice of passion is silent, while reason and conscience can speak and be heard, determine which you will do. To assist in forming a right determination, consider how frequently, how greatly you have already sinned against God. How often, when temptation urged you, and God forbade you to sin, have you yielded to the former, and disobeyed the latter. Are not those instances already sufficiently numerous? Are they not too numerous? Are you not ready

to wish that, when tempted to sin, you had always replied, How can I sin against God? Do you feel nothing like sorrow, nothing like relenting, when you reflect how often you have sinned against all that is endearing in relation, against all that is sacred in authority, against all that is touching in kindness? Can you contemplate God impartially and say, I think I have treated him as well as he deserves to be treated. He has no reason to complain of the manner in which I have treated him. I have paid him all that I owe him. I have loved him and feared him, and obeyed and thanked him, as much as he has any right to expect? If you cannot say this; if you feel that you have not treated your God, your Creator, your Benefactor, your Redeemer, as he deserves, can you refrain from lamenting it? Is there nothing in your breast which makes you wish to fall at his feet and say, Lord, I have not treated thee as thou art worthy to be treated. I have sinned, I have committed iniquity. I have done foolishly. O, forgive me, for thy Son's sake forgive me, and let me offend thee no more. If any thing within urges you to do this, O yield to it; for it is the Spirit of God urging you to repentance. If you feel any disposition to do it, indulge that disposition; for it may prove the commencement of repentance. And if you repent of past sins, you will feel disposed and enabled to say with new resolution, How can I any more sin against God? for you will then come under the influence of new motives, and will see new reasons why you should guard against sin; for as soon as you become a penitent sinner, you will be a pardoned sinner; you will taste and see that the Lord is good; you will know something of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; and that love will constrain you to live, not unto yourselves, but to him who died for you and rose again. Then you will say, How can I, a redeemed sinner, a pardoned sinner, whom Christ has bought with his own blood, who have by a most wonderful display of divine grace and mercy, been saved from the lowest hell,—how can I any more sin against my deliverer? I am become a member of Christ. How can I crucify my head? God has adopted me as a child: How can I sin against my Father in heaven? The Spirit of God has taken up his residence in my heart: How can I grieve him and provoke him to forsake me?

Such are some of the new motives under whose influence you

will come, if you now yield to him who urges you to repent. O then yield to the gentle inward monitor which, I would fain hope, is now whispering repentance. Give way to those better feelings which are beginning to rise within you; and under their influence fall at the feet of your much injured and long offended, but still gracious God. Let me, I beseech you, let me see peace restored between you and him before you leave this house. Come with me to his mercy seat and say, Other lords, O God, have had dominion over us; but they shall rule us no more. We have sinned, greatly sinned against thee; but we would sin no more. O hold us back from sin; turn us from all our iniquities; help us to say from the heart, we will be thy people; and say thou to us, I will be your God.

SERMON LXXXI.

SOLOMON'S CHOICE.

And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.
1 Kings iii. 10.

In the context we are informed that, soon after Solomon's coronation, the Lord appeared to him by night, and said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father, and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in; and thy servant is in the midst of a great people that cannot be numbered for multitude. Give thy servant, therefore, a wise and understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, nor riches, nor the lives of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold I have done according to thy word; I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, so that there shall be none like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

My friends, though our situation differs in many respects from that of Solomon, yet from this passage we may learn many in-

teresting and important truths. We may learn from it, indeed, almost everything that is necessary to render us prosperous and happy, both with respect to this world and to that which is to come. To illustrate and enforce some of the principal truths which it teaches, is our present design.

I. The address which God made to Solomon when he said, Ask what I shall give thee, he does in effect make to each of us, especially to the young. It is true, the age of visions and revelations is past; God does not now speak to us with an audible voice, nor is it necessary that he should. The revelation which he has given us in his word, renders it needless. But the language in which he addresses us in his word is precisely similar to that in which he spoke to Solomon. By erecting a throne of grace in heaven, opening the way to it, inviting us to come to him with our requests, and promising to grant our petitions when they are agreeable to his will, he does in effect say to each of us, Ask what I shall give thee. I have set before thee the blessing and the curse, the way of life and the way of death. On the one hand, I set before thee Christ and holiness and everlasting life; on the other, sin and the world and eternal death. Choose then which thou wilt have. Wilt thou have the pleasures of sin, or the pleasures of religion? Wilt thou have treasures on earth, or treasures in heaven. Wilt thou have the praise of men or the praise of God? Wilt thou have Christ, or wilt thou have the world? To these questions of his Creator every man by his conduct returns a direct, unequivocal answer. If he pursues religion as the one thing needful, he practically replies, Lord, I choose religion; I choose thee for my portion, and Christ for my Saviour, and heaven for my rest. Give me but these, and I am satisfied. If, on the contrary, he devotes himself supremely to sinful or worldly pursuits, he no less directly replies, Lord I choose the world. I choose its pleasures as my happiness, its riches as my portion, its applause as my honor. Give me them and I ask nothing more. I shall not trouble myself as to the consequences of this choice hereafter. Let me but be happy in this world. Others, if they please, may have the other world to themselves.

II. Though we are not, like Solomon, kings; and therefore need not, as he did, qualifications requisite for that office; yet we all need spiritual wisdom and understanding, and may there-

fore all imitate his example in making our choice. For instance, the young may do this. Every one may say; Lord thou hast given me an immortal soul, a soul which thou hast made, and for the loss of which thou hast taught me, that the gain of the whole world would be no compensation. But I know not what to do with it. I know not how to keep it, nor where it will be safe, but am in danger of losing it continually. I find myself in the midst of a sinful, seducing world, exposed to innumerable snares and temptations, surrounded by artful and insidious enemies who often assume the garb of friends, with many paths opening before me, each of which appears to be the path to happiness. I am told that in this world scarcely any object appears in its true colors; but that good is often put for evil, and evil for good, darkness for light, and light for darkness. I am also told, and I begin already to find with truth, that I have a most deceitful heart, ever watching to betray me; that my understanding is blinded by sin, that I am inclined to evil, not to good; that my appetites and passions will unceasingly strive to lead me astray. Already have they begun to do it; already have I been guilty of many errors and mistakes. I fear that I shall be guilty of more. O then, thou Father of spirits, thou Father of lights, give me, I beseech thee, a wise and understanding heart, that I may discern between good and evil, and have strength to avoid the one and pursue the other. O condescend to be my shepherd, the guide of my youth; lead me in the way that is everlasting.

Every parent, also, has reason to adopt the prayer of Solomon. Every one, who sustains this relation, may say, Lord, in addition to my own soul, thou hast confided to my care the souls of my children, with an injunction to educate them for thee, and teach them the good and the right way. But we have no wisdom nor skill, nor strength to do this. Our children have derived from us a corrupt nature which we know not how to subdue. They are exposed to the influence of bad examples, and many other evils, against which we know not how to guard them. Even we ourselves shall set before them a bad example, unless thy grace prevent. We are in danger of ruining them by too much indulgence, on the one hand, or too much strictness and severity on the other. When we look around us we find but few, even among the wise and good, who succeed in educating

their children aright; how then can we hope to succeed, we who are like little children ourselves, and need every moment to be taught, and guided, and upheld by thee. Give us then, O our heavenly Father, give us a wise and understanding heart, that we may know how to perform this great duty, and be preserved from the guilt of ruining the immortal souls committed to our care, and compelling thee to require their blood at our hands. Again,

Professors of religion have reason to imitate the example of Solomon. By admitting us into thy church, O Lord, they may say, thou hast in a measure committed to our care the honor of thy religion, the success of thy cause. If we display a wrong spirit, or conduct in a sinful or imprudent manner, thy religion will be despised, and thy great name blasphemed by many around us; we shall be as stumbling blocks in the path of life to occasion the destruction of our fellow creatures, perhaps of our nearest friends. This, O Lord, we are in continual danger of doing. We are exposed to dangers from within and from without, on the right hand and on the left. While we avoid one extreme, we are in danger of running into another. When we aim to recommend religion by cheerfulness, we are in danger of falling into levity and vain conversation, and when we endeavor to avoid levity, we are liable to prejudice our friends against religion by gloominess and melancholy. Against these and innumerable other dangers, to which we are exposed, we have no skill or wisdom to guard. We know neither how to go out nor how to come in. Give thy servants therefore, O Lord, a wise and understanding heart, that we may adorn thy religion, and honor thy great name. Give us that wisdom which is from above, which is pure, peaceable, full of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Make us what thou requirest us to be, wise as serpents and harmless as doves. I might proceed to show that ministers, magistrates, and indeed persons in every situation and relation of life, have abundant cause to pray frequently for a wise and understanding heart, that they may know how to perform the duties of their respective stations. As an encouragement for all to do this, I observe,

III. That God is pleased with those who make the choice and sincerely offer up the prayer of Solomon. Our text informs us that God was pleased with his conduct on this occasion, and

since he is, yesterday, to-day, and forever, the same, he is pleased with all who imitate his example. He is pleased with their conduct,

1. Because it is the effect of his grace. We are told that the Lord rejoices in his works, and with reason does he rejoice in them; for they are all very good. If he rejoices in them he must, of course, be pleased with them. But to induce persons to make the choice and offer up the prayer of Solomon, is always his work, the effect of his grace. It is one of those good and perfect gifts which come down from the Father of lights; for no man, who is not taught and influenced by the Spirit of God, will ever make this choice or sincerely utter this prayer. Men naturally choose and ask very different objects. Should God say to an impenitent sinner, Ask what I shall give thee, he would reply, — Lord, give me temporal prosperity, give me pleasures or riches or honor; for these are the great objects which every sinner loves and desires, and in the acquisition of which his happiness consists. When the Lord looketh down from heaven upon the children of men, he seeth that there are none that understand, none that even seek after God. Before a man can sincerely choose God for his portion, and prefer spiritual wisdom to all earthly objects, his natural views must therefore be changed; he must be taught to love and value the objects which he naturally despised, and to despise the objects which he supremely loved and pursued. In a word, he must become a new creature, and to create him anew is the work of God. Since then God is pleased with all his works, and since this is his work, he must be pleased with the choice and with the prayer mentioned in our text.

2. He is pleased with it, because it indicates opinions and feelings similar to his own. In the opinion of Jehovah, spiritual wisdom, that wisdom of which the fear of God is the beginning, is the principal thing, the one thing needful to creatures situated as we are. In comparison with this he considers all temporal objects as worthless. His language to us is, above all things get wisdom and with all thy gettings get understanding. Now those, who make the choice which Solomon made, estimate objects according to their real value; that is, according to their value in the estimation of God. Their opinions and feelings in this respect correspond with his; and since all beings are neces-

sarily pleased with those who resemble them; God cannot but be pleased with those who resemble him in this respect. These opinions and feelings are a part of his own image, and he must love his own image and be pleased with it wherever it is seen.

3. God is pleased with those who thus pray for a wise and understanding heart, because such prayers are indicative of humility. When Solomon said, I am as a little child, I know not how to go out, or how to come in, give thy servant therefore a wise and understanding heart, it evidently indicated a low or humble opinion of his own qualifications, and a deep conviction of his need of divine illumination. Similar language indicates similar feelings in all who adopt it. It indicates that they are not too proud to be taught, that they possess what our Saviour calls the temper of a little child. Now no temper so well becomes such creatures as we are; no temper is so pleasing to God to no temper does he make so many precious promises as this. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. These promises are sufficient proofs that God is pleased with humility, and since the language of our text indicates humility, God cannot but be pleased with all who sincerely adopt it.

4. God is pleased with such characters, because their conduct evinces that they are actuated by a benevolent concern for his glory and for the happiness of their fellow creatures. It is evident that Solomon in our text was actuated by such a temper, and not by a selfish regard to his own interests. He does not say, give me wisdom and understanding that I may have the praise of it, that my fame may be extended, but that I may discern between good and evil, and know how to rule this thy great people. He knew, as he observes in the context, that God had placed him on the throne. He therefore feared that if he should prove incompetent to the duties of this station, God who called him to it would be dishonored. He feared that the mistakes and faults of the servant would reflect disgrace upon the master

who employed him. He also knew that the happiness of his people depended much upon his own qualifications for government. It was a regard for the honor of God, and for the happiness of his people, therefore, rather than for his own sake, that he wished for wisdom and understanding. A similar disposition actuates those who sincerely imitate the conduct of Solomon at the present day. When the young pray for wisdom to guide them in the journey of life, the parent for assistance in educating his children, the professor for grace to adorn his profession, and the magistrate or minister for necessary qualifications, it is not so much for their own sakes as for the sake of others. It is that they may be enabled to honor God and do good to their fellow creatures by a faithful performance of their respective duties. It is true that many selfish, unhallowed desires may, and often do, intrude on such occasions; but still the prevailing governing disposition is such as has been described. Now this is a disposition exceedingly pleasing to God, whose name and whose nature is love, and who requires us to exercise that charity which seeketh not her own.

Once more; God is pleased with those who imitate the example of Solomon, because it actually and greatly tends to promote his glory. This it does in two ways. In the first place, by praying to him for wisdom, we do in effect profess a belief that he exists, that he is a prayer hearing God; and, especially, that he is the only wise God, the Father of lights, the author and giver of every good and perfect gift. As we honor a man, when we apply to him for counsel and advice in difficult cases, so we honor God, when we apply to him for wisdom and grace. In the second place, by confessing that we are as little children, — ignorant, blind, and helpless, and praying for a wise and understanding heart, we do in effect give God the glory of all that we are enabled to do in his service, or for the happiness of our fellow creatures. Our language is, not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, who are foolish and ignorant, but unto thee, who art the author of all wisdom and goodness, be the glory of every thing which we are enabled to perform. When we read of the wisdom of Solomon in connection with our text, we are led to admire not Solomon, but him who first taught him to pray for wisdom, and then gave him all that he possessed. When St. Paul says, by the grace of God I am what I am, he evidently

turns away the attention of his admirers from himself to God, and refers to his grace the glory of all he did and suffered in the cause of Christ. So when persons at the present day confess that they have no wisdom or goodness of their own, and pray that God would give them a wise and understanding heart, they give him the whole glory of all the wisdom and understanding which they afterwards exhibit through life. Now since God's glory is exceedingly dear to him, and since this conduct thus tends to promote his glory, he must evidently be pleased with those who imitate it. As a farther inducement to imitate the example of Solomon, I observe,

IV. That all who make his choice, and adopt his prayer, shall certainly be favored with a wise and understanding heart. That Solomon received this gift you need not be told. Equally certain is it that all who imitate him shall receive it in such a degree, as their situation and circumstances require. This is evident, in the first place, from the fact already adverted to, that it is God who by his grace inclines them to make this choice. It is he alone who convinces us of our natural blindness and ignorance, and of our need of divine illumination. It is he who teaches us to estimate objects according to their real worth, and to choose spiritual wisdom in preference to all earthly objects. It is he who opens the way to the throne of grace, and gives us all the graces which are necessary to enable us to pray acceptably. Surely, then, he will not after all this refuse to hear the prayers which he has himself taught us to make. He cannot but gratify the desires which he has himself inspired. We know not, says the apostle, what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.

That God will gratify the desires of those who thus pray for wisdom, is farther evident from his express promises. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth liberally to all men and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. If thou cry after knowledge and lift up thy voice for understanding, if thou seek her as silver and search for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, which is the

beginning of wisdom, and find the knowledge of God. In a word, If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Once more; as a farther inducement to make the choice of Solomon, I observe, that this is the surest way of obtaining a competent share of the good things of the present life. Because thou hast asked this thing, said God to Solomon, and hast not asked for thyself long life, nor riches, nor the life of thine enemies, behold I have done according to thy words; and have also given thee what thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days. In a similar manner Christ promises to reward similar conduct in his disciples. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. In this, as in other respects, it is true that he who loseth his life for Christ's sake shall save it; that is, he who from a principle of supreme love to Christ and his religion neither desires nor seeks for riches and honor, shall receive as large a portion of them, as an infinitely wise Father sees it best for him to possess.

IMPROVEMENT. Is it true, as we have asserted, that God does in effect say to every person present, or at least to every young person, Ask what I shall give thee? It becomes us all then to inquire what reply we are making to this address. Say then, my hearers, what are you asking God to give you? Some of you, I fear, do not ask any thing of him. Prayer is a duty to which you are almost or altogether strangers. But still your conduct has a language, and what does it say? What is the object of your prevailing desire and pursuit? What would you ask for, if you should pray and ask for that which you uniformly love and desire? If we may judge from the conduct of a large proportion of this assembly, they would be far from adopting the language of Solomon. Many of the young would say, Lord, let us be admired and beloved for wit, beauty, dress, accomplishments. Let our days be filled up with a round of diversions and amusements. Let us live a long life of ease, gaiety and worldly pleasure, and when old age comes, if there be any such thing as conversion, let us be converted, and taken to heaven. Others would say,—Lord, give us wealth with all the blessings it bestows. Let us outstrip all our rivals in the

acquisition of property, and excel them in the elegance of our habitations, our dress, our equipage; while the prayer of a third class would be,—Lord, grant us honor and distinction. Raise us to an elevated rank in society, and let those, who are now our equals, bow down to us. In short, if we may judge from the conduct of many of you, long life, pleasure, riches and honor, the very things which Solomon did not ask, would be the favors for which you would petition, and for the sake of which you would be willing to renounce the gift of a wise and understanding heart. Now if this be the case, you can surely have no reason to wonder or complain, if God should take you at your word. He has put a price into your hands to get wisdom; but like the fool you have no heart to it. He has told you that godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come; but you will not believe him. You have, therefore, no promise for this life or the next; and if, in the other world, you should find yourselves in the wretched situation of the rich man who fared sumptuously every day, and, like him, beg for a drop of water to mitigate your anguish, God may justly say to you, as Abraham did to him, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things. Thou didst choose the world for thy portion, and thou hast had it. Christians, on the contrary, had all their evil things in the other world; but now they are comforted and ye are tormented. But if any of you are conscious that you have made the choice, and that you are daily uttering the prayer of Solomon, this subject is to you full of consolation and encouragement. God is pleased with your choice. He is pleased with those who have made it, he is pleased whenever you approach him in prayer with the language of Solomon on your lips. You have not perhaps been aware how many graces you were exercising, how much you were honoring and pleasing God; while, lying in the dust, ashamed and broken hearted before him, you have said,—Lord, I am ignorant, weak and helpless, as a little child, entirely unfit for the situation in which thou hast placed me, and ignorant how to go out or come in as I ought. Give me therefore, O God, a wise and understanding heart, that I may know my duty and practise it by glorifying thee, and promoting the happiness of my fellow creatures. You did not realize, perhaps, while say-

ing this, as you have often done, to God, you were exercising faith, humility and benevolence, and promoting the glory of God. Yet all this you were doing; all this you will do, whenever you sincerely repeat this language. It will please the Lord whenever you ask this thing, and the more frequently and fervently you ask it, the more will he be pleased. Nor shall you ask in vain. Your prayer shall be answered by the bestowal of increasing measures of knowledge and grace; and the less you think of and desire temporal blessings, the more certainly will God bestow them upon you in such a degree as your present and future happiness requires. Pray then without ceasing, and be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

SERMON LXXXII.

CHARACTER AFFECTED BY INTERCOURSE.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.—PROVERBS XIII. 20.

WE have often reminded you that the terms wisdom and folly, wise and foolish, have a very different signification in the writings of Solomon, from that which they bear in the works of uninspired men. By wisdom, he means something of which the fear of the Lord is the prime constituent; for he says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments. By wisdom, then, he means religion; for religion begins with the fear of God. Of course, by the wise, he intends those who are religious; those who, to use the language of an apostle, are wise unto salvation. By folly, on the contrary, he means sin; and, by the foolish, those who love and practise it; or, in other words, impenitent sinners, who are destitute of the fear of God with which wisdom begins. The import of our text then is this, He that walks with religious men will become religious; but a companion of sinners shall be destroyed. These two assertions I now propose to consider separately, with a view to illustrate their meaning, and convince you of their truth.

I. He that walks with religious men will become religious.

The term walk, as used, by the inspired writers, always sig-

nifies a continued course of conduct, or a manner of living, in which men persevere till it becomes habitual. Thus the phrase, Enoch walked with God, evidently signifies that he lived in a religious manner. He did not repair to God occasionally, when want or affliction or fear of death impelled; he did not merely take a few steps in that path in which God condescends to walk with men, and then forsake it; but he pursued that path habitually and perseveringly; he lived with God, in contradistinction from those who live without him in the world. So the phrase, to walk in the way of God's commandments, evidently signifies, to pursue a course of holy obedience, without turning aside to the right hand or to the left. To walk with religious men, then, is not merely to mingle occasionally in their society, or to unite with them in performing some of the more public duties of religion; but it is to make them habitually our chosen companions and friends, and, in subordination to God, our guides. It is not, for instance, walking with religious men to go with them to places of public worship; for David says of Ahithophel, who died as a fool dieth, We walked to the house of God in company. Nor is it walking with religious men to converse with them occasionally on religious subjects; for David says of the same Ahithophel, We took sweet counsel together; that is, we had conversation pleasant to me, and, as I then thought, to him, respecting subjects of a religious nature. It is not walking with religious men to reside with them, to live in a pious family, and to attend with its members at the family altar; for a person may do this reluctantly, and his chosen associates, the companions of his pleasure, may be of a very different character. Nor does uniting with religious men in promoting some of the great objects which the Christian world is now pursuing, necessarily prove that we walk with them; for we may be led to do this by wrong motives, as well as by those which are right. But to walk with religious men is to choose them for our associates, our fellow travellers in the journey of life; and this implies an agreement with them in our views and objects of pursuit. Can two walk together, says the prophet, except they be agreed? A question which plainly implies that they cannot. In order that two persons may walk together, they must be agreed, first, respecting the place to which they will go; for if one wishes to go to one place, and the other to a dif-

ferent place, they cannot be companions. In the second place, they must agree in opinion respecting the way which leads to that place; for if they disagree in this they will soon separate. In these two particulars, then, all who would walk with religious characters must agree.

Now the place to which every religious person, is travelling is heaven. Every such person, the Scriptures inform us, is a pilgrim and stranger on earth, seeking another and better country, that is a heavenly. Of course, all who would walk with them must make heaven the object of their pursuit, the place which they aim to reach.

Again; in the opinion of every truly religious person, the only way to heaven is Jesus Christ; for I, says he, am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me. All those who walk with religious persons must agree with them in assenting to this truth. I do not mean that they must immediately and cordially embrace it, for they would then themselves be religious; but they must have such a conviction that there is a heaven, and that an interest in Jesus Christ is necessary to obtain it, as will draw them away from sinful society and sinful pleasure, and induce them to associate with Christians, to unite with them in attending diligently all the means of grace, and to listen with interest to religious conversation; they must, in short, have such a conviction of the truth and reality and importance of religion as to adopt the resolution and the language of Ruth: Entreat us not to leave you, nor to return from following after you, for where you go, we will go, where you dwell we will dwell; your people shall be our people, and your God our God, nor shall any thing part us. Nor is it sufficient to adhere to this resolution for a short time only, for every person, who becomes the subject of serious impressions, forms such a resolution, and adheres to it so long as these impressions remain. During this period he loses all relish for worldly pleasures, and for conversation of a worldly nature, and can enjoy no society but that of Christians. But in too many cases this state of mind is of short duration. Their serious impressions are effaced, their desire for earthly and sinful objects revives, they forsake religious pursuits, and religious society, and return more eagerly perhaps than ever, to their former courses, their former associates. Such persons cannot be said to walk with

religious characters, in the sense of our text; they do at most but take a few steps with them, and, instead of adhering to the resolution of Ruth, imitate the conduct of Orpah, who after a short struggle between her convictions and her inclinations, went back to her country and to her idols. But those, who instead of thus drawing back to perdition persevere to the end of life in the course which has been described, really walk with religious persons, and will themselves become religious. There are several circumstances and considerations which, taken collectively, prove the truth of this assertion, though no one of them taken separately would be sufficient to prove it.

In the first place, the simple fact, that a person chooses to associate with religious characters, in religious pursuits, proves that he is already the subject of serious impressions; that his understanding is convinced of the reality and importance of religion; that his conscience is awakened, and that, to use the language of inspiration, the Spirit of God is striving with him; for it is most certain that, unless this is the case, no person will ever forsake his sinful pleasures and pursuits, and his sinful companions for the society of Christians. All his natural feelings and inclinations render him averse to their society, and prevent his finding pleasure in religious pursuits; while, at the same time, they urge him to pursue worldly objects, and give him a relish for the company of worldly associates. He is also aware that, should he forsake his worldly companions for the society of Christians, he will expose himself to their contempt and become the subject of their ridicule. What then is to induce him to act contrary to his natural feelings and inclinations, and to exchange society which he loves, and in which he finds pleasure, for that which is disagreeable, and to expose himself to ridicule and contempt? It is most evident that nothing can do this but the power of an awakened conscience, of strong conviction produced by the Spirit of God. He then, who begins to walk with religious persons, is already the subject of religious impressions, the Spirit of God is operating upon his mind, and this affords some reason to hope that he will become really religious. At least his situation is much more hopeful than that of a person who feels no religious concern.

In the second place, he who walks with religious persons, will see and hear many things which powerfully tend to increase

and perpetuate those serious impressions of which he is already the subject; while, at the same time, he will be withdrawn from the operation of many of those causes by which such impressions are effaced. There is nothing which tends more powerfully to obliterate these impressions, than the society, the conversation, and example of the world. These causes have destroyed more, who once were not far from the kingdom of God, than perhaps all other causes united. Indeed it is, humanly speaking, impossible that any serious impressions should remain long upon a mind, which is exposed to the full malignant influence of these causes. But he who walks with religious persons, is very much withdrawn from this fatal influence. Not only so, but he is brought under a different and salutary influence. He moves in a circle where God and the Redeemer, and the soul, and salvation, and heaven, are regarded as objects of supreme importance; and where the world, with all which it contains, is considered as comparatively worthless. He moves in a circle where he sees religion exemplified, where it is presented to him not as a cold abstraction, or as a lifeless form, but living, breathing, and acting, in the person of its disciples. He sees the salutary and happy effects which it produces; he sees that it does not, as he once thought, render its votaries gloomy or morose or misanthropic, but that its fruits are love and joy and peace. In addition, he hears much conversation on religious subjects, much that is calculated to instruct him, to warn him, and to increase his conviction of sin, and his desire to become truly religious. Besides he is almost daily brought under the operation of some of the means which God employs to produce and increase conviction, and to effect conversion. It is therefore, to say the least, highly probable that he will become truly religious.

In the third place, as the term walk signifies a continued course of conduct, it is evident that one, who walks with religious men, must be the subject of serious impressions for many years successively. We have already seen that no one will begin to walk with religious persons, till he becomes the subject of serious impressions. Equally evident is it, that no one will continue to walk with them after his serious impressions are effaced. He then who does continue to walk with them through life, must be the subject of serious impressions through life.

But no one, it is presumed, ever heard of an instance in which a person, who was the subject of serious impressions through life, did not become religious. It is true persons may be seriously affected, occasionally, and perhaps for years together, and at different seasons, may associate much with religious characters, without becoming religious; but such persons cannot be said to walk with good men in the sense of the text; for their religious impressions are often effaced for a considerable time, and long intervals of carelessness succeed, during which they forsake in a great measure religious pursuits, and religious society. But it is believed that no instance can be found, of a person who continued through life to walk with religious characters, and yet never become religious. We readily allow, indeed, that such a thing is possible; there is nothing in the nature of things to prevent it. God could, if he pleased, produce convictions of sin, and apprehension of future punishment which should last through life, and yet never be followed by conversion. But this is not his method. His method is, to give up those who obstinately resist his grace, to hardness of heart and to blindness of mind, and thus leave them to walk in their own ways, and to be filled with the fruit of their own devices. Hence the serious impressions of those who finally perish are usually of short continuance; or if they continue long, it is with many interruptions. Nothing but real grace, but genuine religion, will enable a man to endure to the end. He then who continues to walk with religious men to the end of his life will become religious. Indeed he must have become so before many years, perhaps before many months had been spent in such a course.

II. Let us now consider the second assertion contained in our text, A companion of sinners shall be destroyed. By a companion of sinners is evidently meant, one who chooses for his associates persons regardless of religion. It does not render us companions of sinners to reside with them, to transact business with them, or to visit and converse with them for the purpose of performing kind offices, or of promoting their eternal interests. But if we select them as our intimate associates; if we choose to spend our leisure hours in their company; if we find pleasure in their society, and prefer it to that of religious persons; then we are certainly their companions in the sense of

the text, and shall perish with them. The truth of this assertion will appear evident from the following considerations viewed collectively.

In the first place, it is certain that he, who is in this sense a companion of sinners, is the subject of no religious impressions, that he has few if any serious thoughts. The very fact, that he chooses such persons for his associates and companions, proves that he resembles them; that his views and feelings respecting religion correspond with theirs, and that their conversation is agreeable to his taste. Referring to such characters, our Saviour says, They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth or listeneth to them. Hence it appears that they whose conversation is of a worldly nature, and they, who listen with pleasure to such conversation, are alike of the world. Besides, we have already seen that as soon as any person becomes the subject of serious impressions, he wishes to associate with serious characters. Such persons only will converse with him on that subject which lies nearest his heart, and which therefore is most interesting; from such persons alone can he obtain that information which he desires; and they alone can understand and sympathize in his feelings. To speak on worldly subjects to such a person, will be like singing songs to a heavy heart. How can he, who is burdened with a load of guilt, and feels that his soul is in danger; that his eternal interests are at stake — find pleasure in conversing on subjects comparatively worthless and trifling? It is impossible. Nothing then can be more certain than the fact, that he, who selects irreligious persons for his companions, and finds pleasure in their society, is not the subject of any serious impressions. He exactly resembles those with whom he associates, and is like them pursuing the broad and crowded road which leads to destruction.

In the second place, he who chooses for his companions, persons regardless of religion, takes the most effectual way to prevent any serious impressions from being ever made on his mind. Experience and observation unite to prove, that the human mind, as is said of the chameleon, takes the complexion of those with whom it associates, and that the force of example, especially of bad example, is almost irresistible. There is in human nature a principle of association, in consequence of

which we can scarcely avoid becoming, in some degree at least, conformed to those with whom we associate on intimate and friendly terms. The operation of this principle is powerfully assisted, and its effects increased, by that desire to please which is natural to man. Hence he, who selects persons regardless of religion as his companions, will become more and more like them; he will imitate their example; he will become thoroughly imbued with their spirit; and receive their principles and maxims as the perfection of wisdom. He will see them treat religion with indifference and neglect; he will hear them speak of it, if they speak of it at all, with levity, if not with contempt; he will find that they consider attention to it as quite unnecessary, and regard those who are the subjects of serious impressions as weak and deluded. Now it is evident that nothing can tend more powerfully than this to prevent him from ever becoming the subject of such impressions. It is evident that, by mingling in such society, he will become hardened against the truth, and fortified against every argument, motive, and consideration of a religious nature which can be presented to his mind. He will come to the house of God, not with any desire to receive instruction, but merely to spend an idle hour in vain thoughts, or in unprofitable gazing, or in listening for something to which he may plausibly object, or turn into ridicule; and while divine truth drops around him like the rain, and distils as the dew, there will be, if I may so express it, an umbrella spread over his head which will suffer no salutary drop to fall upon him; or in the language of Scripture, there will be a veil upon his heart, through which the light of divine truth cannot penetrate. It is therefore evident, not only that such a person has no serious impressions, but that there is very little reason to hope he will ever be the subject of them.

In the third place, he who selects persons regardless of religion for his associates, takes the most effectual way to banish those serious thoughts which will occasionally rise in the minds even of the most careless. God employs various means to excite such thoughts. An attack of disease, the death of a companion, or an awakening sermon, often occasions them. Now if a person in whose mind such thoughts arise, would entertain them willingly, cherish them, commune with his own heart and seek the society of religious persons, the consequences might be

most happy and lasting. But if he associates with persons regardless of religion, his serious thoughts will almost infallibly be banished. Suppose, for instance, that a person, who comes careless and thoughtless to the house of God, finds his attention arrested, his understanding convinced, his conscience awakened by the truths which he hears. While listening to these truths, he probably forms a kind of vague, undefined resolution, that he will pay more attention to religious subjects than he has done. But he leaves the house of God, and almost unavoidably falls in with some of his irreligious companions. He soon finds that the truths, to which he has been listening with interest, have not affected them in the same manner. If he ventures to hint, that the sermon was convincing, or the subject of it important, his remarks are received with the most frigid indifference, or with a look of surprise mingled with contempt. He is therefore obliged to repress his serious thoughts, and such thoughts when repressed soon leave us. Besides, he must make an effort to enter into conversation, or his companions will suspect him of being serious,—a suspicion which he cannot bear to have them entertain. The subject of conversation will, of course, be of a worldly nature; it will excite worldly thoughts, and thus his serious thoughts will be banished, so that, before he quits his companions and returns home, the effect of the truth which he has heard is entirely obliterated. I dare appeal to many of you, my hearers, for the truth of these remarks. Many of you cannot deny that you have been religiously affected by the truth which you have heard in this house; nor can you deny that, when you were thus affected, the society, conversation and example of your irreligious companions, banished your serious thoughts and lulled you to sleep again in the lap of sinful security. Thus it will always be, while you choose such companions. You may be a thousand times roused, and a thousand times may resolve that you will be more attentive to religion; but so long as you are a companion of sinners, your serious thoughts will be banished and all your resolutions broken.

Finally, he, who associates with persons regardless of religion, will inevitably form confirmed habits of feeling, thinking and acting, which will operate most powerfully to prevent him from ever becoming religious, and thus effect his destruction. The language of inspiration is, Can the Ethiopian change his skin

or the leopard his spots? then may those, who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well. But by associating with irreligious companions, men soon become accustomed to do evil. They acquire confirmed habits of neglecting religion, of delaying preparation for death, and of banishing serious thoughts. They also become more blindly devoted to the world, more fond of the society, conversation, and pursuits of those with whom they associate, and of course more enslaved by their influence and example. Thus, to use the language of Scripture, their bands are made strong, so strong that they will probably never break them. Nor is this all, there are among us few men, at least few young men, totally regardless of religion, whose morals are perfectly pure; few, who are not addicted to some species of vice. One is profane, another is intemperate, a third is debauched, and a fourth is not strictly honest. These sins may, at first, disgust a young man, whose morals are as yet uncontaminated; but if he continues to associate with those who are guilty of them, his disgust will infallibly, though gradually, subside. He will first tolerate these vices, for the sake of those who practise them. then he will learn to give them soft, extenuating names; next he will be taught that it is a proof of spirit and genius in a young man, to plunge into some excesses; finally he will take the plunge, and be entangled in a whirlpool, from which there is little reason to hope he will ever escape. What thousands and what millions of once promising youth have been ruined in this manner! Multitudes of our race have died in consequence of taking the plague, the yellow fever, the small pox, from the diseased but far greater multitudes have been ruined, both for this world and for the next, by taking the infection of vice from vicious companions.

From the preceding remarks, it appears that he, who associates with persons regardless of religion, has no present religious impressions; that he takes the most effectual way to prevent such impressions from being made on his mind, and to efface them when they are made; and that he is continually forming habits most unfavorable to religion, and thus bringing himself into a state in which he can no more learn to do well. than an Ethiopean can change his skin, or a leopard his spots; of course, he will die without religion, and the doom of all who die without religion, is destruction. The companion of sinners then

will be destroyed. It remains to make some improvement of the subject.

1. From this subject we may learn what course we are pursuing, and what will be our fate if we continue in our present course till the end of life. We cannot but know who are our chosen companions and associates; with whom we love to converse, and in whose society we find most pleasure. We cannot but know whether they consist of persons apparently religious, or of those who pay no regard to religion. Say then, my hearers, who are your associates? Are you walking with religious characters, or are you companions of sinners? I ask this question, not only of those out of the church, but of those who are in it; for, strange as it may appear, there are many in the church of Christ, who are companions of sinners. They are united to the church only by the external tie of a profession; they do not walk with it; their hearts are not with it, but with the world. They feel most at home in worldly society; in such society they find most pleasure. In worldly conversation they engage with most interest; worldly objects they pursue with most ardor. Now such persons, notwithstanding their profession, are companions of sinners in the sense of our text. Say then, my hearers, what are you? Are you with Christ or against him? Can you truly say to God, in the language of the psalmist, I am a companion of them that fear thee, and that keep thy precepts? Are such characters your chosen associates, in whose company you find most pleasure, with whom you love to spend your leisure hours? Then you either are religious, or if you continue to pursue this course through life, will become so. But if you are a companion of those who pay no regard to religion, you are certainly irreligious. and if you pursue this course, destruction, everlasting destruction, will be your portion.

2. Let me beseech all present, and especially the young, to be guided by this subject in making choice of their associates. Remember that you are immortal beings, choosing companions for eternity. Remember, that if you choose to associate with persons regardless of religion now, you must associate with them forever. You must be partners with them in their destruction. Remember too, that when you meet them in the other world, you will find them stripped of every quality which now renders their society pleasing. For from him which hath not,

shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have. Then those who are now your tempters shall be your tormentors, and feel a diabolical gratification in adding to your wretchedness. On the other hand, if you walk with good men, you shall have them for your companions through eternity; and not as they are now, stained by many imperfections, but perfect in every intellectual and moral excellence. Nor is this all. You shall also enjoy the society of angels, of your Redeemer, of your God. O then, be companions of them that fear God. Shun the society of every one who is addicted to any vice, as you would shun a man infected with the plague; for if you associate with such a person, there is almost a moral certainty that his vices will become yours. Still more earnestly would I press an attention to this subject on those who are the subjects of serious impressions, or who have any serious thoughts. Do you wish to have such thoughts forever banished, such impressions effaced from your mind? do you wish to live without religion, to die without hope, and to perish forever? Then choose for your companions persons who are regardless of religion. On the other hand, do you wish that your serious thoughts should continue, that your serious impressions should become deep and lasting, and that they should end in conversion? do you wish to live religiously, to die triumphantly, to be happy eternally? Then shun irreligious society and walk with good men. Choose them for your companions, listen to their instructions, request their prayers, imitate their example, attend with them on all the means of grace, converse with them freely respecting your religious concerns. Pursue this course without interruption, and the issue will be happy.

Finally; permit me, in the name of all God's people, to address to each of you the invitation which Moses gave to Hobab; We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.

SERMON LXXXIII.

CHARACTER OF DANIEL.

O Daniel, a man greatly beloved.—Daniel x. 11.

One of the great excellences of Scripture is, that it points out to us the path of duty, not only by precept, but by example. Not to mention the perfect pattern of a holy life, which it sets before us in the character and conduct of Christ, it presents to our view men of like passions with ourselves, in almost every possible variety of situation; and while it urges us, by the most powerful motives, to become followers of those who, by faith and patience, now inherit the promises, it clearly describes the way which led them to glory; and teaches us, by their example, in what manner to discharge the duties, support the trials, and overcome the temptations, of our probationary state.

Of those whose characters are thus recorded for our imitation, few, if any, will be found superior to Daniel. His life as described in Scripture, appears to be without blemish. He is almost the only eminent saint there mentioned, of whom no fault is recorded. Nor was his character for goodness merely of the negative kind. Even during his life, he was placed by Jehovah himself, in the same rank with Job and Noah; men eminent in their day for faith and piety. In addition to this infallible testimony in his favor, we find him, once and again, addressed by an angel, as a man peculiarly dear to God. O man greatly be-

loved, says he, fear not; peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong: for I am come to give thee skill and understanding, for thou art greatly beloved. The same title is given him in our text, by one who appears to have been the Son of God. I looked, says the prophet, and behold a man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold. His body also was like the beryl; and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright; for to thee am I sent.

My friends, nothing is more indispensably necessary to the welfare of all creatures, than the favor of their Creator. To be greatly beloved of God is the highest honor and happiness, to which we can possibly attain, either in this world or the next. Hence it becomes a matter of infinite importance for us to know how this privilege is to be obtained. This knowledge we may easily acquire, from an attentive consideration of the life and conduct of Daniel. We know from infallible testimony that he was greatly beloved; and have therefore every reason to conclude that all who resemble him will enjoy the love and favor of God. Let us then carefully examine his character, and ascertain, if possible, why he was so greatly beloved by his Creator.

The first thing in his character which deserves our attention, is his early piety. Like Josiah, though he was very young when carried captive to Babylon, yet even then he appears from his conduct to have been eminently pious. He must therefore, like Josiah, have begun at a very tender age, to seek after the Lord God of his fathers. At a period of life, when most young persons are wholly engrossed by follies and trifles, and know nothing of spiritual and divine things, he was well acquainted with the law of God; and, though a child in years, was a man in knowledge and understanding. This remembrance of his Creator in the days of his youth, when mankind generally forget him, was doubtless one among other things, which gave him so distinguished a place in the divine favor; for God's language to his creatures is, I love them that love me.

Another trait in the character of Daniel, deserving our atten-

tion, is the caution, zeal and resolution which he displayed, in keeping himself unspotted from the world. This, the apostle James informs us, is an essential part of pure and undefiled religion; and for this, Daniel was highly distinguished. When carried to Babylon, he, with a few companions, children in whom was no blemish, but who were well-favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and possessing ability to stand in the king's presence, was selected from the other captives, and taken into the royal palace; that they might acquire the learning and language of the Chaldeans. In this situation, the king appointed them a daily provision of his own meat, and of the wine which he drank; so nourishing them for three years, that, at the end thereof, they might stand before the king. But Daniel purposed in his heart, that he would not defile himself with the king's meat. Various reasons might induce him to adopt this resolution. He might do it from love of country, and his fellow captives, with a view to show his sorrow for their calamities. He could say with Nehemiah, why should not my countenance be sad; why should I indulge my appetite in feasting when the city and place of my father's sepulchres lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. For a Jew to be joyful when his nation was thus smarting under the judgments of heaven, was not only unsuitable and improper, but highly displeasing to God: for we find in the prophet Amos, a wo denounced against those who eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the stall, and drink wine in bowls, in a time of public calamity, but are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph. A regard to his country, and to this threatening, might possibly have some influence in producing Daniel's resolution not to defile himself with the king's meat. But it was, more probably, from a principle of obedience to the divine law. You need not be told, that, by the law, the Jews were strictly forbidden to eat certain animals, which were used for food among the heathen; and that all kinds of food which had been previously offered in sacrifice to idols, were considered by them as unclean. Had Daniel shared in the king's provision, he would have been

under the necessity of eating, not only meats which had been offered to idols, but meats which were absolutely forbidden by the law of Moses. He, therefore, resolved not to defile himself by partaking of it; but to live only on herbs and water. If we consider the circumstances of his situation, my friends, we shall find reason to admire the firmness, zeal, and tenderness of conscience, displayed in this resolution. In age, he was but a child. The royal delicacies which he was invited, and even commanded to partake of, would doubtless have been highly gratifying to his appetite; and he might easily have invented many plausible excuses for enjoying them. He might have pleaded that he was a captive, and under obligation to obey those into whose power Providence had thrown him. He might have pleaded that by refusing to partake of the king's meat, he should bring upon himself much ridicule and reproach, and perhaps expose himself to severe punishments. He might have pleaded that the Jewish ceremonial law was not intended to be binding in a foreign country; and that since he was among the Chaldeans, he was under the necessity of complying with their manners and customs. With much less plausible excuses than these, do young persons, in general, satisfy themselves for complying with the sinful customs and manners of the world. But Daniel, notwithstanding his tender age, had sufficient firmness of mind to reject them. Be the consequence what it might, he was determined to maintain his integrity, and to preserve himself unspotted in the midst of a luxurious court, and ensnaring examples. Thus he early began to deny ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and to live soberly and temperately, presenting his body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. This conduct doubtless had a tendency to secure the divine favor, and to render him a man greatly beloved by his Creator. It proved that he was not ashamed of his religion, his country, or his God; and that like Moses, he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

A third remarkable trait in the character of Daniel, is the holy indifference and contempt with which he looked down on worldly honor, wealth and applause. We have already seen how little he valued, even in his youth, those worldly, sensual pleasures, by which the young are so often fascinated and en-

snared. As little did he value wealth and honor. Though he was of royal descent, and though he had, from his infancy, been educated in courts where religion was neglected, God dishonered, and the world idolized as the one thing needful; and though he possessed, in the court of Babylon, every possible opportunity and advantage, for acquiring riches and honors, yet he seems to have overcome all these temptations, and to have considered all these ensnaring objects, for which millions barter their souls, as trifles unworthy of his pursuit. It is true, he obtained both riches and honors; but it is no less true that he never sought them. They came to him unasked and undesired. He evidently appears to have preferred a calm, retired, humble station, to all that kings and courts could give. Witness the manner in which he treated the monarchs under whose government he lived. Instead of flattering them, as did others, and as he would have done, had he desired to secure their favor, he never failed to reprove them for their sins, when a favorable opportunity was offered him. Hear with what holy boldness he reproved the proud Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful monarch on earth. Break off thy sins, says he, by righteousness; and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. This was strange language to the ears of a prince, who was accustomed to hear nothing but the most extravagant praises and flatteries; and who was never addressed by his subjects without their prostrating themselves before him. With the same holy zeal and fortitude did he reprove the impious Belshazzar. When he offered to clothe Daniel in scarlet robes, adorn his neck with a chain of gold, and make him the third ruler in the kingdom, he replied with a holy contempt for these glittering trifles, let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another. Thou, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all that befel thy father, for his pride; but thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, and the God in whose hands thy breath is, thou hast not glorified. This, my friends, is not the language of a man of the world, who wished for the riches and honors which kings bestow on their favorites? No; it is the independent language of a man crucified to the world, and regardless of what that world could bestow. This trait in his character was indispensably necessary to render him beloved by his Maker; for we are expressly assured that the love and friendship of the world are enmity with God.

Another part of Daniel's character which we are called to notice, is his exemplary piety and devotion. He was emphatically a man of prayer. Though he lived in the midst of the tumult, noise, and confusion of a court, and during a great part of his life, had almost the sole direction of the counsels and offices of a powerful nation, which must necessarily involve him in an ocean of business, cares, and perplexities; yet he daily found much more time for secret prayer, than many Christians can find at the present day, who have nothing but their own private concerns to engage their attention. He never pleaded, as an excuse for neglecting this duty, that his body was too much wearied, and his mind too much perplexed by constant care and fatigue, to perform it. No; whatever obstacles might oppose it, or however loudly necessary business might demand his attention, he prayed to God regularly three times in a day; and he would much sooner have thought of neglecting his daily food, and sleep, than of omitting these accustomed devotional exercises. He lived, in this respect, like a man who knew that his soul needed daily refreshment, as well as his body; and who felt that, without God, he could do nothing. Praying was not with him, an idle form, a heartless ceremony, or a duty performed merely to quiet his conscience. No; it was his joy and delight; it was the very life of his soul; and with almost as much ease, might the sun be turned from his course, as he from his daily approaches to the throne of grace. Even the commands of the king, and the certainty of being cast into the den of lions, could not, for one moment, deter him from the performance of this duty. My friends, do you love prayer thus fervently and sincerely? How often, think you, should you approach the throne of grace, if your way to it lay through a den of lions?

But to return. In addition to the prayers which Daniel offered up, three times in a day, he frequently set apart seasons for more especial attention to this duty. He set his face, as he expresses it, to seek the Lord God by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes; and in the performance of these duties, he sometimes spent the greater part of every day, for weeks together. Since God loves those who love him, we cannot wonder that a man whose fervent love for his Maker led him so frequently and constantly to the mercy seat, should be greatly beloved in return.

Another trait in the character of this eminent saint, was his strong faith, and confidence in God. That he possessed such a faith is evident from the frequency and fervency of his prayers; since none truly pray, but those whose faith is strong and lively. That his faith was of this character is further evident, from his conduct, and from the testimony of Scripture. It was this which enabled him, without shrinking, to enter the lion's den, and which preserved him there unhurt. He was taken up out of the den, we are told, and no manner of hurt was found upon him; why?—because, says the inspired penman, he believed in his God. This, this alone preserved him. Like Moses, he endured as seeing him who is invisible. By faith, he could realize God's presence, and his ability to shut the lions' mouths. It was in consequence of possessing such a faith as this, that Abraham was called the friend of God. My friends, is your faith of this kind? Does it produce effects similar to these? Does it support and comfort you in dangers, trials, and temptations? It will do so, if it be genuine. But if it is not, if it is mere natural, speculative belief, it will have little effect. It will not overcome the world, it will not lead you to encounter perils and difficulties, for the sake of Christ; it will not enable you to see him who is invisible. It is without fruits; it is dead.

Again; profound humility, and a consequent disposition to give the glory to God, is another remarkable trait in the character of Daniel. This appears in his confessions and praises. Notwithstanding his eminent piety, we find him saying, O Lord, we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled by departing from thy precepts, and thy judgments. He seems to be at a loss for expressions sufficiently strong to describe the greatness of his sins, and heaps words together, in order, if possible, to show the deep sense which he entertained of his guilt and unworthiness. In the exercise of the same humble temper, we find him renouncing all pretensions to any worthiness or righteousness of his own; and depending entirely on the sovereign mercy of God. He might have trusted to his own prayers and merits, with as much propriety as any man that ever existed; but instead of this, we find him saying, O Lord, unto thee belongeth righteousness, but unto us confusion of face: we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great

mercies. The same humble temper is strikingly expressed in his language to Nebuchadnezzar, when he revealed to him his dream with its interpretation. Instead of taking to himself the glory of this interpretation, he says, There is a God in heaven, who revealeth secrets; but as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for the sake of any wisdom that I have more than others. Here, my friends, you see the genuine language of humility. He was afraid that the king would suppose, either that he had discovered this secret by his own wisdom, or that it was revealed to him for the sake of his own superior goodness; and that thus, God would lose the glory of his own work. With a view to prevent this, and to lead the king to give the glory to God, he modestly disclaims all praise, and refers it to him to whom it was due. He who thus humbles himself shall be exalted.

The last trait in the character of Daniel, which I shall mention, is, that his religion was habitual, uniform, consistent, and lasting. He was always the same. In childhood, in youth, in manhood, and in age; he inflexibly followed the path of duty, and steadfastly adhered to the God of his fathers. Nothing could seduce, nothing could drive him from his course, or induce him to deviate from it, for one moment, in the smallest possible degree. Of this, his conduct, when his enemies conspired to ruin him, affords a striking and satisfactory proof. When he knew that the decree, condemning any one who should pray to God for thirty days, to be cast into the den of lions, was irrevocably passed, he went into his house and prayed to God, as usual, three times a day; his windows being open towards Jerusalem. Yet how many plausible excuses might he have made, for conducting differently; and how many would he have made, had he resembled some professing Christians of the present day. He might have pleaded that his life was of great consequence to his countrymen; that it was in his power to do much good, in his then elevated station; that he was bound to obey the king his master; that it was his duty to preserve his own life; and that it would do no harm to any one, on such an occasion, to abstain from prayer for thirty days. At least, he might have urged that it would be justifiable, in such circumstances, to shut his windows, and pray in private; and thus disappoint the wicked designs of his enemies. These excuses,—any one but a real Christian would have made, and considered himself jus-

tified in omitting prayer entirely, or at least performing it in secret. But Daniel was really religious, and therefore could not be deceived by these plausible excuses. He knew that he was watched. He knew that if he neglected to pray with his windows open, as usual, his enemies would assert that he had omitted that duty. He knew that, in this case, it would be said, See, Daniel, notwithstanding his pretended firmness and piety, can, like others, make his religion bend to his interest. He prefers his life to his duty. He cannot trust in his God to save him. His God, therefore, can be no better than the gods of the nations; and his religion is no better than ours. Thus God would be dishonored, the Chaldeans would be prejudiced against the true religion, and a glorious opportunity of suffering for Jehovah, would be lost forever. These reasons did not allow Daniel to hesitate a moment respecting what he ought to do; and for him to know what he ought to do, and to do it, were the same. He never troubled himself about consequences. He only asked, what is duty? When he once saw the path of duty, he would follow it though hell should open her mouth in his way. This, the whole tenor of his conduct proves; and a similar course must be pursued by all who wish to be, like him, beloved by their Maker.

Improvement.—1. From this subject we may learn, my friends, how religion dignifies, and ennobles our nature, when it is entertained in its power and purity. How noble, how dignified, how sublime, does the character of Daniel appear! That you may see this in its true light, bring him forward; and compare him with the nobles, princes, and great ones of Babylon. See them indulging in sensual pleasures, proud of their wealth and birth, panting for riches, honor, and applause, seeking these transitory trifles by every possible means, neglecting immortal honors and glories; and meanly envying and hating that excellence, which they could not reach. See Daniel, on the contrary, calm, firm, and self-collected; with an eye fixed on God and heaven, despising the trifles which they pursued, aiming at the glory of his Maker, and the happiness of his fellow creatures, and following with unconquerable, undeviating resolution, the path of duty. While they grovelled on the earth, his head, and his heart were in heaven;—while their minds were darkened by the clouds of ignorance and prejudice, and their breasts con-

vulsed by the storms of ambition, avarice, envy, and revenge; his exalted soul dwelt in regions of eternal day, far above the clouds of mental ignorance, and the storms of contending passions. That you may, still more clearly, discern the superiority of his character, compare him with the kings whom he served. See Belshazzar, making a great feast, to a thousand of his lords; and surrounded by every thing, which could dazzle or delight the senses. See Nebuchadnezzar, walking in the midst of his palace, reflecting with self-complacency, on the nations he had subdued; and proudly exclaiming, Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? Then turn your eyes to the prophet. See him, with that heroic boldness, which nothing but true piety can give, reproving the pride of one of these kings, and the impious extravagance of the other; see him, in defiance of threats, and impending danger, bending his knees to the only being whom he feared; see him, with unshaken calmness and serenity, sitting in the midst of ravenous lions, who, like lambs, crouch at his feet; — and then say which was the more dignified character, he, or the proud kings of Babylon. Nay more, say which possessed the more enviable titles and honors; he or they? They were styled princes, on earth. But he, as a prince, had power with God and prevailed. They were honored, admired, and applauded by their fellow-worms; but he was greatly beloved by his God. Who would not be Daniel in the lion's den, rather than Belshazzar, at his feast, or Nebuchadnezzar on his golden throne? O how evidently does it, in this instance, appear, that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbor. Such being the superior excellence of Daniel's character, permit us farther to improve the subject, by inquiring,

2. Do you, my friends, possess a similar character? This, all must allow to be an important question; since if we do not resemble Daniel, we are not, like him, beloved of God. Say then, does your temper, your conduct resemble his? Did piety like his distinguish your early years? Have you kept yourselves unspotted from the world, when temptations to sensual indulgence were peculiarly plausible and urgent? Have riches as little attraction for you as they had for him? Is your piety habitual, the same in all circumstances; and are you equally

fervent and persevering in prayer? Have you the same strong faith, and equally triumphant in the darkest times; and do you manifest the same deep humility, and unmoved firmness and resolution?

Lastly, permit me to improve this subject, by urging all present to imitate the conduct of Daniel. To induce you to this, consider what an unspeakable honor and privilege it is, to be greatly beloved of God. It is the highest honor and happiness to which a creature can arrive. It includes every thing, which creatures can possibly desire; for, if God love us, then all things are ours, all things must work together for our good, and nothing can do us any real injury; for, says the Apostle, if God be for us, who can be against us? O then, if you love life, if you love happiness, if you love yourselves, be persuaded to copy the example of Daniel. Let those of you who are young, begin early, like him, to seek after the Lord God of your fathers, and remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Begin from this day to cry unto him, My father, thou art the guide of my youth. Let those who have lost this precious season, remember that it is not yet too late, and strive to redeem the time which they have wasted, by double watchfulness, zeal and diligence. Above all, let those who profess to be the people of God, consider their peculiar obligations, to imitate this ancient worthy. Would to God, my professing friends, you could be prevailed upon to feel the force of these obligations. Would to God, that every member of this church were a Daniel, in weanedness from the world, in humility, in resolution, in faith, and in prayer. How would religion then revive and flourish among us. How would gainsayers be confounded. How would our hearts be encouraged, and God be glorified. How would your own souls rejoice. My Christian friends, why will not each of you be a Daniel? Are there no motives, no considerations, which will rouse you to exertion? Is there nothing in your natures, on which we can operate; no spark of holy ambition, of sacred zeal, which can be blown up into a flame? O that we could breathe a divine, celestial ardor. into your souls, and fire you with inextinguishable, insatiable desires after growth in grace. O that we could persuade you to pursue religion, with that patient, zealous, habitual, unwearied diligence, and resolution, with which you pursue the things of this world. Then should we see our wishes

realized; then would this church be as a crown of glory, in the hand of the Lord, and as a royal diadem, in the hands of our God: then would there not only be some, but many, among us, to whom angels might say, Fear not, but be strong, O ye, who are greatly beloved of your God.

SERMON LXXXIV.

OUR OBLIGATIONS TO GOD AND MEN.

Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and to God, the things that are God's.—Mark xii. 17.

At the period of our Saviour's residence on earth, the Jews were greatly divided in opinion, respecting the lawfulness of paying tribute to the Roman emperors, under whose government they were. The Pharisees, prompted by ambition, and a wish to obtain popularity, earnestly contended that, as the Jewish nation were the peculiar people of God, they ought not to submit or pay tribute to a heathen power. The Herodians, as is generally supposed, maintained that, in their present circumstances, it was not only necessary but lawful. In this dispute, the common people sided with the Pharisees, while all who wished to secure the favor of the Roman government, took part with the Herodians. In these circumstances, the enemies of our Lord flattered themselves that by proposing to him this much disputed question, they should infallibly draw him into a snare. Should he decide in favor of the lawfulness of paying tribute, they could represent him to the people as an enemy to their liberties, and thus excite against him their indignation. Should he on the other hand, assert that to pay tribute was unlawful, they could accuse him to the Roman Governor, as a mover of sedition. The plot was artfully laid, and its execution artfully conducted; but in vain did human craftiness attempt to circum-

vent divine wisdom. Instead of directly replying to their question, our Saviour called for a piece of money, and asked, whose image and superscription it bore. They said Cæsar's. Render then, said he, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's.

The spirit of this passage requires us to regard the rights of all beings as sacred, and to give them all what is theirs; or, as it is elsewhere expressed, to render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, and honor to whom honor is due. This important practical truth, we now propose to consider. I do not conceive that it requires any proof. You will, I doubt not, readily acknowledge, that we are bound to render to every being, what is his just due. All that is necessary, then, is to show what is due to the several beings with whom we are connected. In attempting to do this, I shall show.

I. What is due to God, and

II. What is due to men from each of us.

I. What is due to God; or, what are the things, the property of God, which our Saviour here requires us to render him.

The question may be answered very briefly; in one word; and that word is, all; for it is very easy to show that all things are in the most perfect sense the property of God. No right of property can be more perfect than that which results from creation, and surely no one present will deny that all things were created by him. Agreeably he claims them all. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and all that dwell therein, for he founded and established it. The silver, he says, is mine; and the gold is mine; mine is every beast of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. Of course, we, and all that we possess are God's property, more strictly so than any thing which we call our own is our property, and he claims it all. But general remarks do not affect us. It is therefore necessary to descend to particulars, and mention separately the things that are God's and which he requires us to render to him.

1. Our souls with all their faculties, are the property of God. He is the Father of our spirits. Glorify God, says the voice of inspiration, in your spirits which are his. If any of you hesitate to acknowledge the justice of his claim to your souls, look at them for a moment. Contemplate their immortality, their

wonderful faculties, the understanding, the will, the imagination, the memory, and then say, whose image and superscription do they bear? Who gave you these faculties? Who endowed them with immortality? Must it not be the king immortal, the only wise God, to whom it is owing that there is a spirit in man; who has given us more understanding than the beasts of the field, and made us wiser than the fowls of heaven? Our souls then, with all their faculties, are his, and to him they ought to be given. Is it asked, what is implied in giving our souls to God? I answer, we give them to him when we employ all their faculties in his service; in performing the work which he has assigned us. We give them to him when our understandings are diligently employed in discovering his will; when our memories retain it, our hearts love it, our wills submit to it, and the whole inner man obeys it. This is what is implied in the first and great command, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.

2. Our bodies are the property of God. As he is the Father of our spirits, so also is he the former of our bodies. Thine eyes, says the psalmist, did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, when as yet there were none of them. Thy hands, says Job, have made me and fashioned me round about; thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh and fenced me with bones and sinews. The same work God has performed for each of us. Hence the Apostle exhorts us to glorify God with our bodies which are his, and to present them as living sacrifice to God, holy and acceptable in his sight, which is our reasonable service. Rendering to God his own, implies then the giving of our bodies to him. This is done when we employ our members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness. It is neglected when we use them as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.

3. Our time is God's property. This is indeed implied in the remarks which have already been made. Our time is that part of duration which is measured by our existence. But during every moment of our existence, we are the property of God. To his service, therefore, every moment of our time ought to be consecrated. If, at any moment, we are not serving him, we, during that moment, withhold from him ourselves.

4. All our knowledge and literary acquisitions are God's property. They were acquired by us in the use of that time, and of those faculties which are his; and, of course, he may justly claim them as his own. And we find, that he does claim them. He compares our faculties and his other gifts to a sum of money, entrusted by a master to his servants, to be employed and increased for his benefit. And by the punishment which that master inflicted on a slothful, unfaithful servant, who neglected to improve his talents, he shows us what will be the doom of those who do not cultivate their faculties, or who do not consecrate to him, the fruits of that cultivation. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive how we can justify ourselves in acquiring knowledge, unless with a view to serve him more effectually. If it be not sought with this view, it must be sought merely for the purpose of gratifying, enriching, or aggrandizing ourselves; a motive to action, of which God does not approve, and which is in direct opposition to the letter and spirit of our text.

5. Our temporal possessions are God's property. They are all, either the gifts of his providence, or, as was remarked respecting our literary acquisitions, were obtained by the use of time and faculties which belong to him. They are his also by the right of creation, a right, as has been observed, of all rights the most perfect. Agreeably, we find that men are frequently represented in the Scriptures, not as the owners of their possessions, but merely as stewards, to whose care the Lord of all things has entrusted a portion of his property, to be employed agreeably to his directions. These directions allow us to employ such a portion of the property thus entrusted to us, in supplying our own wants, as is really necessary to our support and happiness, or as is consistent with the rules of temperance and the demands of benevolence. But, if any part of it be spent in gratifying what St. John calls the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life, it is devoted to a purpose for which our master never designed it, and he will consider and treat us as unfaithful stewards.

Lastly; our influence is God's property. This follows as a necessary consequence from the preceding remarks. All our influence over others results either from our natural faculties, our knowledge, or our wealth; all of which have been shown to be the property of God. Of course, the influence which we

derive from any of these circumstances, is his also, and ought ever to be exerted in promoting his honor and interest in the world. It appears, then, that rendering to God the things that are God's, implies consecrating to his service, our souls, our bodies, our time, our knowledge, our possessions and our influence. He who withholds from God any of these things, or any part of them, does not comply with the precept in our text.

II. I proceed, as was proposed, to show what things are due from us to men. At first view it may seem as if nothing were due; or, at least, that we have nothing which we can render to them; for if, as has been shown, we, and all that we possess are the property of God, what remains for men? I answer, if God had not required us to render something to men, nothing would be due to them, nor should we have the smallest right to bestow any thing upon them. But as God is the sole and sovereign proprietor of everything that exists, he has a perfect right to say how it shall be disposed of. He has a right to appoint such receivers as he pleases, and he has in part appointed our fellow-creatures to be receivers of a large portion of what we owe him. To this portion, they have, therefore, a just claim. And when we regard this claim, when we give any thing to men, in compliance with the will of God, he considers it as given to him. The question, what is due from us to our fellow creatures, is then equivalent to the inquiry, what are those things which God requires us to give to men, and to which they have therefore a right; a right, founded in his revealed will. This question I now propose to answer.

1. All men, without exception, have a right to our love; a right to expect that we should love them as we love ourselves; and that as we have opportunity, we should do to them, as we should wish them, in a change of situation, to do to us. This, as I need not inform you, God expressly requires. Love thy neighbor as thyself. Whatsoever things ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them Nor are our enemies to be excepted; for, says our Saviour, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. All men then, so far as they are known by us, have a right to our love, and to all the kind offices which love would prompt us to perform. Every man, who dies without having done all the world,

all the good which it was in his power to do, dies in debt to the world, or to the world's Creator. Withhold not good, says the voice of inspiration, from him to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it. Do good to all men, as ye have opportunity. To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Much more then have our fellow creatures a right to expect that we should do them no injury. They have a right to our good opinion, till they forfeit it by misconduct. They have a right to expect that we refrain from speaking evil of them, except when duty requires it; to expect that persons, reputation and property, should be in our hands as safe as in their own. It is scarcely necessary to add, that all with whom we transact any business, have a right to be treated with the most perfect fairness and honesty. Love will, of course, lead to this. Justice requires it. God commands it. Let no man, he says, overreach or defraud his brother in any matter; for the Lord is the avenger of all such. Now the man who knowingly takes or retains the smallest portion of another's property, is dishonest, unjust, and exposes himself to this threatening.

Nor will it avail anything for him to plead that he takes no more than the law gives him; for human laws are necessarily imperfect; and their application must, in many cases, be still more so. They often allow men to take, or to retain that, to which, by the law of God, they have no right. And remember, that we are to be tried, not by the laws of men, but by the law of God. He then, who, in any case, takes more than the law of God, the law of love allows, or retains what that law forbids him to retain, is condemned by it. The rust of his unlawful gain, says an apostle, shall witness against him, and eat his flesh, as it were fire. Among such unlawful gains, must be included all that is acquired by defrauding the public revenues. The only difference between defrauding the public and defrauding an individual, is, that in the former case, we cheat many, and in the latter, only one. The sum which each man pays the public, is paid for a valuable consideration. It is paid for the secure enjoyment of life, reputation, liberty and property. If one man pays less than he ought for this purpose, others must pay more, and then they are defrauded.

2. To all whom God has made our superiors, we owe obedi-

ence, submission and respect. As subjects, we are bound to obey, honor and pray for our rulers. Let every soul of you be subject to the higher powers. Submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. Pray for all that are in authority. As children we are required to honor and obey our parents. But as this duty has been recently under consideration, it is needless to enlarge. Servants are required to be obedient to their masters with all reverence, not answering again, and to account their masters worthy of all honor; and they, adds the apostle, who have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren, but rather do them service because they are faithful. We may add that the aged, considered merely as such, have a claim to respect. Thou shalt rise up, says Jehovah, before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man.

3. To our inferiors we owe kindness, gentleness and condescension. They have a right to expect that their feelings should not be needlessly wounded, and that regard should be paid to their comfort and convenience. Parents provoke not your children to wrath. Masters forbear threatening. Let all condescend to men of low estate. The poor and afflicted have special claims. The afflicted have a right to our sympathy; the industrious poor to pecuniary relief. With respect to this duty, many indulge erroneous opinions. They allow that we ought to be just and honest, to pay our debts, but with respect to liberality to the poor, they seem to imagine that we are left at liberty to do as we please. But if the law of God be adopted as our rule we shall find that it requires charity no less than justice. We shall find that we owe a debt to the industrious poor, which, though they cannot, strictly speaking, demand, God requires us to pay. In his sight, the man who is not charitable to the poor, is dishonest and unjust. But with respect to the indolent poor, the decision of Scripture is, that if any man will not work, neither shall he eat.

4. Those of us who are members of Christ's visible church, owe to each other the performance of all the duties, which result from our connexion. We are bound to watch over our professing brethren, to admonish them when needful, and to seek in all things the peace and welfare of the church. We are also under

special obligations to promote their temporal interest; for while the Scriptures command us to do good to all men, they add, specially to those who are of the household of faith.

Lastly; there are some things which we owe our families and connexions. As husbands and wives, we owe each other the strict and faithful performance of the promises which we made, when we were united. As parents, we owe our children the best education for this world and the next, which it is in our power to give them. As heads of families, we are bound to provide for their wants, to the utmost of our power, for he who neglects to do this, has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.

Thus, my hearers, have I stated the principal things which we owe to God, and to men, and the payment of which is implied in rendering to both the things which are theirs. The justice of this statement, I think no one can deny, who does not deny the authority of the Scriptures. On this ground I am prepared to meet any man, and defend the truth of every position which has been advanced. It only remains to improve the subject.

1. In view of this subject, how great, how incalculable is the debt which we have contracted, both to God and to men. All the things which have been enumerated justly belong to them, and ought to have been paid them, from the first moment of our moral existence. But surely I need not attempt to prove that we have not paid them. We have not even rendered to men, the things that are men's; much less have we rendered to God the things that are his. Every day, every hour of our waking existence, we have withheld something both from God and from men, which was due to them. Every day and hour, therefore, our debt to him is increasing. Well then may our Saviour represent us as owing a debt of ten thousand talents. Well may God accuse us of robbing and defrauding him. Will a man, says he, rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. How vain, how false then, are the pretences of those who assert that they have injured no one, that they pay every one his own; and how presumptuous are the hopes which they build upon this assertion! They make all religion to consist in paying their pecuniary debts, and in avoiding any instance of dishonesty, which is for-

bidden by human laws. They deny or forget that God has any rights; they think it neither unjust nor dishonest to withhold from him his property. But, my hearers, though we forget God's rights, he will not; nor will he suffer them to be disregarded with impunity. He knows how to claim and to receive what is his. He has death ready to arrest us. He has an eternal prison from which there is no escape, in which multitudes of unfaithful stewards are now confined, and in which he will confine us, till the uttermost farthing be paid; unless we can find a surety, able and willing to take our debts upon himself. Hence,

2. We may learn our need of an interest in the Saviour, and the impossibility of being saved without him. We evidently cannot discharge our past debts. Should we, from this moment become perfect, and render both to God and men all that is theirs, it would not prevent our debt from increasing. It could make no satisfaction for the past. It could cancel no part of the debt which we have already contracted, and for that we should still be answerable, and must still be condemned. In this view the situation of every sinner is desperate. He is loaded with a debt which he is unable to pay, which is constantly increasing, and which he must discharge or perish. But though we have thus destroyed ourselves, in Christ there is help. He becomes surety for all that believe in him; takes upon himself the debt, which they can never discharge, and thus sets their souls at liberty. By the assistance of his grace, and through him as their mediator, they are enabled to present themselves to God, living, holy and acceptable sacrifices. This is the way and the only way of salvation.

And now, my hearers, what shall we say to these things? I make no appeal to your passions. I appeal to your understandings and consciences, and ask, is it not just that God should require us to render to him and to men, what is due to each respectively? Is it not just that he should punish those who neglect to do this? Have we not all, even the best of us, neglected to do this? Was it not infinitely good and merciful in God to provide a surety to discharge debts, which we might most justly have been called on to pay! Are we not under infinite obligations to him, who consented to become our surety,

and who to save our forfeited lives, laid down his own? And do not reason, conscience, and a regard to our own happiness, combine with Scripture in urging us, to accept the offers of this divine Benefactor; and constrained by his love, to live henceforth to him and not to ourselves! To these questions, my friends, there can be but one true, reasonable, scriptural answer. Practically give them that answer, and your souls shall live.

SERMON LXXXV.

PARTICIPATION IN OTHER MEN'S SINS.

Neither be partaker of other men's sins.—1 Timothy v. 22.

In this chapter the apostle gives Timothy particular directions respecting the duties of his pastoral office; and solemnly charges him before God and the elect angels, to observe these directions; not preferring one man above another, and doing nothing by partiality. One of the most important of his official duties consisted in ordaining other men to the work of the ministry by prayer and the imposition of hands. As it was of the greatest importance that none should be introduced into the ministry who were not suitably qualified, the apostle particularly enjoined it upon him to use great care and circumspection in examining and setting apart persons for this sacred office; and enforced a compliance with this injunction by intimating to him, that, should he neglect it, he would participate in the guilt of every unworthy character, on whom he should carelessly lay hands. Lay hands, says he, suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins, but keep thyself pure.

My hearers, though this caution was originally addressed to an individual with reference to the duties of a particular office, it is of universal application. In many other parts of Scripture we are all indirectly, if not directly, cautioned to beware of partaking in the guilt of others; and introducing improper

characters into the ministry, is by no means the only way in which a disregard of this caution may be shown. In every state of society, and especially in such a state as exists in a civilized country, under a form of government like ours, we are connected with our fellow creatures so intimately, and by such numerous ties, that there are very many ways in which we may become accomplices, or at least partakers, in their sins; and indeed, without great care and watchfulness, it is impossible to avoid being so. In consequence of these connexions, the sins of an individual become the sins of many, and there is no doubt that, in the sight of God, a large proportion of every man's guilt is contracted by sharing in the guilt of others. This being the case, the subject which we have chosen is, I conceive, peculiarly suitable for a day of public humiliation, fasting and prayer. On such a day, we are called upon to humble ourselves before God, not only for our personal sins, but for all the sins of others in which we have made ourselves partakers. In discoursing on this subject, I shall endeavor to show, when we make ourselves partakers in other men's sins; and to state some of the reasons which should induce us to guard against partaking in them.

I. When do we make ourselves partakers in other men's sins? I answer, generally speaking we partake in the guilt of all those sins which we tempt or assist others to commit; of all the sins which we voluntarily or carelessly occasion by our influence or example; of all the sins which we might but do not prevent; and of all the sins against which we do not bear testimony when we have opportunity to do it. On each of these particulars it would be easy to enlarge and to confirm our observations by appropriate quotations from the Scriptures, but these quotations will be more properly introduced in succeeding parts of our discourse. Now from these observations it follows,

1. That ministers make themselves partakers in the sins of their people, when those sins are occasioned by their own negligence, by their example, or by unfaithfulness in the discharge of their official duties. But why do I mention this to you? Not because you are in danger of partaking in this way of other men's sins, but because my subject naturally leads to this remark; because I am willing to preach to myself as well as to

bidden by human laws. They deny or forget that God has any rights; they think it neither unjust nor dishonest to withhold from him his property. But, my hearers, though we forget God's rights, he will not; nor will he suffer them to be disregarded with impunity. He knows how to claim and to receive what is his. He has death ready to arrest us. He has an eternal prison from which there is no escape, in which multitudes of unfaithful stewards are now confined, and in which he will confine us, till the uttermost farthing be paid; unless we can find a surety, able and willing to take our debts upon himself. Hence,

2. We may learn our need of an interest in the Saviour, and the impossibility of being saved without him. We evidently cannot discharge our past debts. Should we, from this moment become perfect, and render both to God and men all that is theirs, it would not prevent our debt from increasing. It could make no satisfaction for the past. It could cancel no part of the debt which we have already contracted, and for that we should still be answerable, and must still be condemned. In this view the situation of every sinner is desperate. He is loaded with a debt which he is unable to pay, which is constantly increasing, and which he must discharge or perish. But though we have thus destroyed ourselves, in Christ there is help. He becomes surety for all that believe in him; takes upon himself the debt, which they can never discharge, and thus sets their souls at liberty. By the assistance of his grace, and through him as their mediator, they are enabled to present themselves to God, living, holy and acceptable sacrifices. This is the way and the only way of salvation.

And now, my hearers, what shall we say to these things? I make no appeal to your passions. I appeal to your understandings and consciences, and ask, is it not just that God should require us to render to him and to men, what is due to each respectively? Is it not just that he should punish those who neglect to do this? Have we not all, even the best of us, neglected to do this? Was it not infinitely good and merciful in God to provide a surety to discharge debts, which we might most justly have been called on to pay! Are we not under infinite obligations to him, who consented to become our surety,

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vicious or irreligious men, knowing them, or having good reason to suspect them to be such, we make ourselves partakers of all their sins. It is evident that the case bears a great resemblance to that referred to in our text. If Timothy made himself a partaker of the sins of every unworthy character whom he carelessly admitted into the ministerial office, then we certainly make ourselves partakers of the sins of every improper character whom we voluntarily assist in appointing to any public office. But as many, even among good men, do not appear to think sufficiently of this truth, it may not be improper to insist upon it more particularly.

In the first place, God has plainly described the characters whom we ought to choose for rulers and magistrates. Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, and hating covetousness, and place such to be rulers. And again, he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. He has also told us, that when the righteous are in authority the people rejoice, but that when the wicked bear rule the people mourn. If then we choose different men for our rulers, we slight God's counsels and disobey his commands.

Again: We are taught in the Scriptures, that we must give an account to God of the manner in which we employ the talents and improve the privileges with which he favors us. Now the right of choosing our own rulers is undoubtedly a most precious privilege. This, I presume, you will readily acknowledge; for we frequently hear of the precious right of suffrage. Now what account of this privilege can they give to God, who have abused it by assisting to place in authority such characters as were enemies to himself and his government, such characters as he has forbidden us to appoint?

Once more; rulers and magistrates are servants to the public. Now we have already reminded you, that what a man does by his servant, he does by himself. If then we voluntarily assist in appointing vicious or irreligious rulers, we make ourselves partakers of all their sins, and must account for all the good which might have been done, had we chosen different characters.

Thus have I attempted to show when we become partakers of other men's sins. If any think I have asserted more than I

nave proved, I reply, we meet with instances in the inspired writings, in which God punished ministers for the sins of their people, parents for the sins of their children, children for the sins of their parents, churches for the sins of individual members, rulers for the sins of their subjects, and subjects for the sins of their rulers. But surely he would punish none for the sins of other men, who had not made themselves partakers of those sins. These facts attended to are, therefore, a sufficient proof of all that we have advanced.

I proceed, as was proposed,

II. To state some of the reasons which should induce us to guard against partaking of other men's sins. The first reason which I shall mention is, that if we partake of their sins, we shall share in their punishment. Hence when God was denouncing vengeance upon the mystical Babylon, he says, come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. Hence, too, the many woes denounced against the companions of sinners of different classes.

Another reason that should induce us to guard against this is, that we shall have sin enough of our own to answer for, without participating in the guilt of others. He who realizes what sin is, what it is to answer for it, and how numerous and great are his own personal sins, will surely wish to avoid sharing in the transgressions of his fellow sinners. But on this part of our subject, time forbids us to enlarge, and requires us to hasten to the improvement.

In the former part of the day, my friends, I endeavored to make yon acquainted with your own personal transgressions. I have now attempted to give you a knowledge of the additional guilt you may have contracted by partaking of the sins of others. And is there an individual present, who does not, in some of the ways which have been mentioned, partake of the sins of those around him? Look first, my friends, into your houses; reflect on the conduct of your children, servants, and apprentices, and see if there be no sins there which you might prevent. In the next place, look through the town; that it is full of sin you need not be told. The cry of it ascends not only into the ear of God, but into those of man. Among all the vices which provoke God, ruin men, demoralize society, and bring down the judgments of heaven, there is scarcely one which is not prac-

tised among us. If a man wishes to indulge in profanity, sabbath-breaking, intemperance, gaming, or debauchery, he knows where to find companions to countenance and assist him, and where to find places set apart on purpose for such abominations. Many of these vices stalk abroad among us, in open day. There is not virtue enough in the community to drive them back into their dens, or to make them hide their heads. The inhabitants of our moral pest houses are suffered to range at large, and spread the contagion of their vices. No wonder, then, that our children inhale the infection; and that many of the rising generation promise to outstrip in wickedness every generation that has gone before them. If it should, God have mercy on our country; for surely nothing but infinite mercy can save it from destruction! Now, my friends, it becomes us to inquire to whom is the prevalence of these vices to be ascribed? If we have no laws to restrain them, then the blame must rest upon our legislators; and those who choose them are partakers in their guilt. But if we have laws to restrain these abominations, then the blame must rest on those whose business it is to execute the laws; and all who prevent, all who do not assist in the execution of these laws, must share in the blame. For my own part, I am determined that, if loud and repeated testimonies against these things can prevent it, none of this blood shall rest with me; and I advise every one, who has any concern for his own soul, or for his eternal happiness, to adopt the same resolution; for it will be no light thing to be found partakers, at the judgment day, of the enormous sins which are committed in this town. Happy will it then be for him who can truly say, I am clear from the blood and from the guilt of all men.

2. It is impossible not to perceive how completely our subject justifies the conduct of those much insulted individuals, who have voluntarily associated for the purpose of assisting in executing the laws, and suppressing vice and immorality among us. Their God, the God whom our fathers worshipped, and whom we, their degenerate sons profess to worship, commands them not to be partakers in other men's sins. They have obeyed the command, and what has been their reward? The same which all the faithful servants of God in all ages have received from those whose welfare they labored to promote, by separating them from their beloved sins. They have been ridiculed,

insulted, turned out of those seats of office, which they honorably and faithfully filled; and are indebted wholly to a good Providence, and to the laws which he has given, for their preservation from worse evils. Many of you, my hearers, have calmly sat by and seen this done, if you have not assisted in doing it. And, my friends, those who thus revile and oppose the friends of virtue and religion, would treat Christ and his apostles in a similar manner, were they now on earth.

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SERMON LXXXVI.

PRAYER FOR RULERS.

I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.—1 Timothy ii. 1,2.

It appears from the preceding chapter, that Timothy had been left, by St. Paul, at Ephesus; to watch over the church in that city, and to guard against the introduction of error, by false teachers. In this chapter, the apostle gives him particular directions respecting some of the social and relative duties which were to be enjoined upon all, who professed to be the disciples of Christ. Among these duties, he mentions first in place, as first in importance, that of intercession; or praying for others. I exhort, says he, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority. It is evident that persons in authority are included in the direction to pray for all men. It appears, however, that the apostle did not think it sufficient, to inculcate the duty of praying for them, in this general way only. He felt that it was necessary to make a particular mention of this duty, in a clause by itself. He does, in effect say, While I exhort you to pray for all men, I urge you, especially to pray for those who possess the supreme power, and for all that are in authority. He thus evidently intimates, that, in addition to the

general reasons, which should induce us to pray for all men, there are particular reasons why we should pray for those who rule. I propose, in the present discourse, to state the reasons why we should pray, with peculiar frequency and importunity, for all who are invested with authority.

I. We ought to pray for those who are in authority, more frequently and earnestly than for other men, because they, more than other men, need our prayers. In other words, they need a more than ordinary share of that wisdom and grace which God alone can bestow; and which he seldom or never bestows, except in answer to prayer. This is evident in the first place, from the fact, that they have a more than ordinary share of duties to perform. All the duties which God requires of other men, considered as sinful, immortal, and accountable creatures, he requires of rulers. It is incumbent on them, as it is on other men, to possess personal religion; to exercise repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; to love and fear, and serve their Creator; and to prepare for death and judgment; for Jehovah's language to them is, Though ye be as gods, ye shall die like men, and have your portion like one of the people. In addition to the various personal duties, of a moral and religious nature, which are required of them, as men, they have many official duties, which are peculiar to themselves; duties which it is, by no means, easy to perform in a manner acceptable to God, and approved of men. They are appointed, and they are required to be ministers of God for good to those over whom they are placed. They are, in a certain sense, his representatives, and vicegerents on earth; for by him they are appointed, and to him they are accountable for the manner in which they discharge their duties. By me, says he, kings reign and princes decree justice; by me princes rule, and nobles, yea, all the judges of the earth. Promotion cometh not from the north, or from the south; but it is God that setteth up one, and putteth down another. There is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God. Since then, legislators, rulers and magistrates are the ministers and vicegerents of God for good, they are sacredly bound to imitate him, whom they represent; to be such on earth, as he is in heaven; to take care of his rights, and see that they are not trampled upon with impunity; to be a terror to evil-doers, and a praise and encourage-

ment to such as do well. They are also bound, by obligations, which ought ever to be regarded as sacred, and inviolable, to seek the welfare of those over whom they are placed, to prefer it, on all occasions, to their own private interests; to live for others, rather than for themselves; and to consider themselves, their time, and their faculties, as the property of the State. As the influence of their example must be great, it is their indispensable duty to take care that this influence be ever exerted in favor of truth and goodness; and to remember that they are like a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid. Now, consider a moment, my hearers, how exceedingly difficult it must be for a weak, short-sighted, imperfect creature like man, to perform these various duties in a proper manner, and how large a share of prudence, and wisdom, and firmness, and goodness, is necessary to enable him to do it. Surely, then, they who are called to perform such duties, in a peculiar manner need our prayers.

2. Those who are invested with authority, need, more than other men, our prayers; because they are exposed, more than other men, to temptation and danger. While they have a more than ordinary share of duties to perform, they are urged by temptations, more than ordinarily numerous and powerful, to neglect their duty. They have, for instance, peculiarly strong temptations to neglect those personal, private duties which God requires of them as men, as immortal and accountable creatures; and a performance of which is indispensably necessary to their salvation. They are exposed to the innumerable temptations and dangers which ever attend prosperity. The world presents itself to them in its most fascinating, alluring form; they are honored, followed, and flattered; they enjoy peculiar means and opportunities for gratifying their passions; they seldom hear the voice of admonition or reproof; and they are usually surrounded by persons who would consider every expression of religious feeling as an indication of weakness. How powerfully, then, must they be tempted to irreligion, to pride, to ambition, to every form of what the Scriptures call worldly-mindedness? How difficult must it be for them to acquire and maintain an habitual, operative recollection of their sinfulness, their frailty, their accountability to God, their dependence on his grace, and their need of a Saviour. How difficult, in the midst of such scenes and associates, as usually surround them;

to keep death in view; to be in a constant state of preparation for its approach; to practise the duties of watchfulness, self-denial, meditation and prayer; and to preserve, in lively exercise, those feelings and dispositions which God requires, and which become a candidate for eternity. How strongly, too, must they be tempted to make the performance of their official duties, an excuse for neglecting those personal duties, which God requires of all men, in whatever station or circumstance they may be placed. I will only add, with reference to this part of our subject, that the Scriptures intimate with sufficient clearness that those temptations are, in most instances, but too fatally successful. They inform us, that not many mighty men, not many noble, are saved. Our Saviour farther declares, that it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God; and it would be easy to shew that the causes which render it difficult for a rich man, operate with equal force to make it difficult for men clothed with authority, to enter this kingdom. We may remark farther, that they have many powerful temptations to neglect, not only their personal, but their official duties. They are tempted to indolence and self-indulgence; tempted to prefer their own private interest, to the public good; tempted to pay an undue regard to the selfish wishes and entreaties of their real, or pretended friends; tempted to adopt such measures as will be most popular, rather than those which will be most beneficial to the community; tempted to forget the honor and the rights of Jehovah, and suffer them to be trampled on with impunity. It can scarcely be necessary to add, that persons who are exposed to temptations so numerous and powerful, peculiarly need our prayers.

3. This will appear still more evident if we consider, in the third place, that, should those who are clothed with authority, yield to these temptations, and neglect either their personal or official duties, the consequences will, to them, be peculiarly dreadful. Their responsibility is greater than that of other men. They have greater opportunities of doing both good and evil, than other men. If they do good, they will do much good. If the influence of their example, and their exertions, be thrown on the side of truth and goodness; no one can compute how great, or how lasting, may be the salutary effects which they will produce. On the contrary, if they do evil, they will do

much evil. They will, like Jeroboam, make their people to sin. We are informed, by an inspired writer, that one sinner destroyeth much good. This remark is true of every sinner; but it is most emphatically true, of sinners who are placed in authority. One such sinner may destroy more good, and prove the cause of more evil, than a whole generation of sinners who are placed in a lower sphere. And even if they do not actually do evil, they may occasion great evil, and incur great guilt, by neglecting to do good. Says the voice of inspiration, To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. In another place, we are taught that men partake in the guilt of all those sins which they might have prevented. Legislators, rulers, and magistrates, then, are answerable to God for all the possible good which they neglect to do; and they share in the guilt of all the sins which they might, but do not, prevent. So far as those who are invested with authority, neglect to prevent, to the utmost of their power, open impiety, irreligion, disregard of the Sabbath, and of divine institutions, profanation of God's name, intemperance, and other similar evils; they share in the sinfulness and guilt of every Sabbath-breaker, profane swearer, and drunkard, among those over whom they are placed.

How great, then, is the responsibility of all who are invested either with legislative, judicial or executive authority! How aggravated will be their guilt, how terrible their punishment, should they prove unfaithful to their country and their God! Surely then, they, above all other men, need our prayers; since they have peculiarly difficult duties to perform, are under peculiar temptations to neglect those duties; and, if they neglect them, will receive a punishment peculiarly severe. And remember, my hearers, that we assist to place them in this difficult and dangerous situation. Are we not then sacredly bound to afford them all the assistance in our power, to obtain for them all that wisdom and grace from heaven, which it is in the power of fervent and persevering prayer, to draw down? Shall we place them, as watchmen, upon a steep and slippery precipice, where it is exceedingly difficult to stand, and infinitely dangerous to fall; and neglect the only means which can render their standing secure? God forbid. It is unreasonable, it is ungenerous, it is cruel and unjust,—cruel and unjust, not only to them, but to ourselves, and to the community. This leads me to observe,

4. We ought to pray with peculiar earnestness for all who are in authority, because our own interest, and the great interests of the community require it. This motive, the apostle urges in our text. Pray, says he, for all in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty. These expressions plainly intimate, that, if we wish to enjoy peace and quiet; if we wish godliness and honesty, or, in other words, religion and morality, to prevail among us, we must pray for our rulers. That we depend on them, under God, for the enjoyment of these blessings, is too obvious to require proof. How much, for instance, do the morals, the peace and prosperity of a State, depend upon the enactment of wise and equitable laws. And how much integrity, wisdom, and prudence, how much knowledge of human nature, of political principles, and of the science of legislation, is necessary to enable men to frame such laws. And from whom shall legislators obtain these qualities, if not from the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift; to whom it is owing that there is a spirit in man, and whose inspiration gives us understanding. Again; if the morals, peace and prosperity of a State depend much on the formation of good laws, no less do they depend on the proper execution of those laws. Indeed, the best laws, unless strictly and impartially executed, are perhaps worse than none; since they only serve to show the vicious and abandoned that legal restraints may be disregarded with impunity. But it evidently depends much on rulers and magistrates whether the laws shall be executed with strictness and impartiality; and perhaps it requires more firmness, integrity, and wisdom to execute them in this manner, than it does to enact them. Permit me to add, that it is exceedingly important that those by whom the laws are enacted and executed, should themselves exemplify obedience to the laws; for if they disregard their own enactments, it can scarcely be expected that others should obey them.

Farther; the peace and prosperity of a nation, evidently depend much upon the measures which its rulers adopt, in their intercourse with other nations. A mistake or error in this respect, apparently trifling, may not only involve a nation in great embarrassment, but can plunge it into all the evils of war; and it is too much to expect of fallible, short-sighted creatures, that

they should never fall into error, unless they are guided by him who sees the end from the beginning, and who can never err.

Once more; the peace and prosperity of a nation depends entirely on its securing the favor of God. This, I presume, no one will deny. But his favor cannot be secured by any nation, unless its rulers are just men, ruling in his fear. We have already observed, that rulers share in the guilt of those national sins which they might, but do not, prevent. We may add, that nations share in the guilt contracted by their rulers, and in the punishment of their sins. Of this remark, many striking verifications are recorded in the Scriptures. Indeed, if those who are placed in authority, become impious, irreligious, or immoral, they will soon, by the force of their influence and example, impart much of their own character to the people over whom they preside; and thus render them fit objects of the divine displeasure. Permit me to add, that we cannot rationally expect to be favored with wise and good rulers; we cannot expect that God will bestow on them those intellectual and moral endowments which are necessary to render them ministers for good, unless we fervently ask of him these blessings; for favors which we neglect to ask, he may refuse to bestow. Nay more, he will probably punish our negligence and impiety, by turning our national counsels into foolishness. We are informed, that when he pleases, he can take the wise in their own craftiness, and carry headlong the counsel of the froward; that he leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh judges to become fools; that he removeth the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged; that he taketh away the heart of the chief of the people, so that they grope, as in the dark; and that he can, on the other hand, counsel our counsellors, and teach our senators wisdom. If, then, we wish to enjoy the protection of wise and equitable laws; if we wish our rulers to be endowed with wisdom, prudence and integrity; if we wish to see our country prosperous and happy; to see learning and liberty, morality and religion flourish; let us never forget to pray with earnestness and perseverance, for all who are invested with authority.

There are some things, in our present situation, which render this exhortation peculiarly seasonable. In the first place, is there not reason to believe, that the duty here enjoined, is a

duty which we, and our countrymen generally, have too much neglected? Have we not all been much more ready to complain of our rulers, than to pray for them? Some have complained of our national government, and some of our State government; but where is the man who has prayed for either, as he ought? Have we not reason to believe that, if one half the breath which has been spent in complaining of our rulers, had been employed in praying for them, we should have been much more prosperous and happy, as a nation, than we now are? If any feel convinced that we have erred in this respect, let me remind them that now is the time to correct our error. We are now commencing a new mode of political existence. Now, then, is the time to correct past errors, and to establish right principles.

In the second place, it is now peculiarly important and necessary that we should pray for our legislators and rulers, because the duties which they are now called to perform, are peculiarly arduous; and because much, very much depends upon the manner in which these duties shall be performed. Not only our own temporal interests, but the future prosperity of the State, the welfare of our children, and of our children's children, will be seriously affected by the official conduct of our present chief magistrate, counsellors, and legislators. To them is committed the difficult and responsible work of shaping the commencement of our course; and such as is its commencement, will probably be its progress and its termination. Surely, then, every one who has a tongue to pray, ought to employ it in earnestly supplicating the Father of lights, to impart to our present rulers, a double portion of his own Spirit; and to give them, as he did Solomon, a wise and understanding heart, that they may know how to rule and guide this people. Let every one who calls himself a disciple of Christ, remember that one of his Master's commands is, Pray, supplicate, intercede for all who are in authority. View them, my friends, in the light of this subject, and methinks you cannot deny them your prayers. See them placed in an awfully responsible station, where they have numerous and difficult duties to perform, where they are exposed to peculiarly powerful temptations, where they are in imminent danger of losing everlasting life, and incurring aggravated guilt and condemnation. Remember that they are men, and of course, weak, fallible, and mortal. Look forward to the other world, and see them there reduced to a level with

other men, and standing before the tribunal of God, where nothing remains of all the honor and influence which they once possessed, except the consequences of the manner in which they employed it. View them in this light, and you cannot but feel for them, and pray for them, that they may obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful, and receive a crown of righteousness in the great day.

To conclude; how desirable is it both to rulers and people, that such a disposition should exist; that the religion which enjoins and produces it, should universally prevail among us. What an encouragement would it be to rulers, to unite their own morning supplications with those of the people over whom they were placed, and with what confidence might they engage in the duties assigned them, believing that he whom they and their subjects had addressed, would direct all their paths. Then religion, and morality and peace and harmony would prevail. Rulers would love their subjects, and seek their good; and subjects would love the rulers, in whose behalf they were daily addressing the throne of grace; while the God whom they both worshipped, would command the blessing upon them, out of Zion; and the world would see how good and pleasant it is for rulers and subjects to dwell together in unity. It is, however, necessary to remark, that all these blessings can scarcely be expected from the prayers of the people alone. They must be attended with the prayers of their rulers. All the considerations which have been urged, as reasons why we should pray for those who are in authority, may be urged with still greater force, as reasons why they should pray for themselves. In this way alone, can they obtain that wisdom and grace which are indispensably necessary to render them faithful in this world, and happy in the world to come. Never, perhaps, since the foundation of the world, has a state been so prosperous, so happy, as was the Jewish nation, while under the government of one who began his reign by saying, Lord, thou hast set thy servant over this great people, and thy servant is as a little child, and knows not how to go out, or come in before them. Give thy servant, therefore, a wise and understanding heart, that I may know how to rule this thy people. God grant that this may be the sincere prayer of all our rulers, and that all the people may say, Amen!

SERMON LXXXVII.

LOVE TO CHRIST INDISPENSABLE.

Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.—John xxi. 15.

We have in this chapter a particular account of an interview between our Saviour, and some of his disciples after his resurrection. Of the disciples, present at this interview, Peter was one. The shameful manner in which he had denied his master, you, doubtless, recollect. Though he had unfeignedly repented of his sin, and, in consequence, obtained pardon, his master thought proper on this occasion to remind him of it again. With this view he addressed to him the question in our text; and as Peter had thrice denied that he knew him, he thrice repeated the question, and thrice drew from him the declaration, Lord thou knowest that I love thee. And you will observe, my hearers, that, while thus examining this backsliding disciple, he asked him no other question. He did not inquire what Peter believed, or whether he had repented; for he well knew that, where love is present, faith and repentance cannot be absent. The question before us is then, evidently, in our Saviour's view, a most important question. And were he now present, it would probably be the only question, or at least, the first question, which he would ask of each of us. If any one present wished

for admission to his church, his table, nothing more would be indispensably necessary to his admission, than an ability to answer this question with truth in the affirmative. Nay more, this is, in effect, the only question which Christ will ask us at the judgment day, the question on our answer to which our destiny will depend; for the language of inspiration, the word by which we shall be judged is, Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity; but if any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be accursed when the Lord comes; and the Judge himself has expressly declared that no man, who does not love him more than he loves any other object, can be his disciple. My design in the present discourse is, to show why the exercise of supreme love to Christ is thus indispensably necessary to our salvation.

1. The exercise of love to Christ is indispensably necessary, because the want of it proves that we do not, in the smallest degree, resemble him; proves that we are destitute of goodness, and, of course, entirely sinful. It may with truth be asserted, that no man acquainted with the New Testament, who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, can be a good man, or possess the smallest degree of love or desire for goodness. It will be readily allowed that Christ was perfectly good. Every good man will, in some degree, resemble Christ. Now those who resemble each other, will, if they are acquainted, love each other. Place good men in the same town, and as soon as they know each other, they will be friends. Or place them at a distance, and let them become acquainted with each other's character by report, without any personal intercourse, and they will feel a mutual affection and wish to meet. But if all who resemble each other, love each other, then every good man loves good men; much more, will every good man love Christ, who is goodness itself, goodness personified, goodness in its most attractive form. If he loves goodness in the stream, much more will he love it in the fountain. He then who does not love Christ, does not, in any degree, resemble him; does not possess the smallest share of goodness; and, as no one can really desire what he does not love, does not even desire to be good. Agreeably, we find that all good beings in heaven, and on earth, have ever loved Christ, so far as they have had opportunity to become acquainted with his character.

2. Love to Christ is indispensably necessary, because without it we cannot perform those duties which he requires of his disciples and which are necessary to salvation. For instance, we are required to repent of the sin we have committed against him; but to do this without love is evidently impossible. Can you, my hearers, mourn, can you feel truly grieved, in consequence of having offended a person whom you do not love? You may, indeed, feel a selfish sorrow, if you fear that punishment will follow the offence; but this is not that godly sorrow which works repentance, and which Christ requires. No; when a child mourns that he has grieved his parents, it is because he loves them. When you feel grieved in consequence of having offended a friend, it is because he is your friend. Love then, love to Christ, is an essential part of those emotions which the inspired writers call a broken heart and contrite spirit. Again, we are required to believe, to confide, to trust in Christ. But can we confide in a being, can we trust our all for time and eternity in the hands of a being, whom we do not love? Can a dying man commit his immortal soul with pleasure to the care of one whom he does not love? Can we even firmly believe the promises, and rest with implicit confidence on the assurances, of one whom we do not love? Evidently not. Where there is no love, there will be want of confidence, there will be suspicion. Indeed, the only reason why sinners find it so difficult to believe in Christ is, they do not love him.

Farther; we are required to obey the commands of Christ, to be his servants, his subjects. Now obedience to many of his commands, involves the performance of duties which seem disagreeable, and submission to sacrifices, which we are naturally unwilling to make. He commands us, for instance, to deny ourselves, to take up the cross, to crucify our sinful affections and desires, to part with every thing cheerfully at his call, to make sacrifices, which he compares to cutting off a right hand and plucking out a right eye. Now we may be willing to do all this for the sake of one whom we supremely love; for love makes hard things easy, and bitter things sweet. But can any man feel willing to submit to all this for the sake of one whom he does not love? Can any man prefer the interest of Christ to his own, and the honor of Christ to his own reputation, unless he loves Christ more than he loves himself? Yet this Christ

expressly requires of all who would be his disciples. In addition to this, we are required to imitate Christ. We are told that he has set us an example that we should follow his steps. But can any one strive to imitate a person whom he does not love? In other words, can he sincerely endeavor to acquire a character with which he is not pleased, in which he sees nothing beautiful or lovely?

Again; we are commanded to rejoice in Christ. Rejoice in the Lord always, says the Apostle, and again I say, rejoice. But how is it possible to rejoice in a being for whom we feel no affection? We can easily rejoice in a friend; but by what unheard of process shall we bring ourselves to rejoice in one whom we do not love? Farther, we are commanded to remember Christ, to commemorate at his table his dying love. But how hard it is to retain in our memories, an object which has no place in our affections. How little pleasure can we find in coming to the table of one whom we regard with indifference? We may indeed, bring our bodies; but our hearts will be absent, and the whole service will be uninteresting to ourselves, and no better than solemn mockery in the estimation of Christ.

Finally, we are commanded to love the friends, the disciples of Christ, and to love them for his sake. But to obey this command without love to Christ is evidently impossible. We cannot love children for the sake of their parents, unless we first love the parents; nor can we love the disciples of Christ for his sake, unless we love Christ himself. It appears, then, that to obey any of Christ's commands without love, is impossible. We may add, that, even if it were possible to obey him without love, our obedience would be unacceptable and worthless; for he searches the heart, he knows what is in man, he cannot be deceived by mere external services and professions, nor is it possible that he should be pleased with them, since he sees them to be insincere.

3. The exercise of supreme love to Christ is indispensably necessary, because without it we cannot relish the society of his disciples, or enjoy communion with them, or consistently unite with them in religious duties. The Apostle John informs those to whom he wrote, that his design in writing his epistle was, to bring others to the enjoyment of fellowship with himself and his fellow disciples. These things declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is

with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Now communion consists in a joint participation of the same views and feelings. That we may enjoy communion with Christians, then, it is necessary that our views and feelings should resemble theirs. But they have exalted views of Christ, and feel supreme love for him. He himself informs us that he has not a disciple in the world, who does not love him more than he loves any other object. How then can one who does not love Christ, relish the society of his disciples, or enjoy communion with them, or unite in their religious services? How unpleasant must be the situation of such a man when surrounded by a circle of lively Christians. Their hearts glow with love to an object in which he sees no beauty. They speak to him of the amiableness and excellence of the Saviour, but he knows not what they mean. Yet he must endeavor to say something, though he has nothing to say; or else maintain a sullen silence, and thus excite doubts of his sincerity. In short, he must feel like a deaf man at a concert of music, or like a blind man in a gallery of pictures, surrounded by others whose senses are gratified and whose admiration is excited. It is the same, when he attempts to unite with Christians in the performance of religious duties. They thank the Saviour, but he feels no gratitude. They praise the Saviour, but he sees nothing to admire; their hearts ascend to heaven on the wings of devotion, but his remains behind. He may indeed find himself able to converse with them on some religious subjects, to contend eagerly for some truths, and to declaim fluently respecting doctrines; but when the beauties and glories of Immanuel are the theme of conversation; when any affection for him is expressed, he must either be silent, or say what his heart does not feel, what it never felt.

Once more; supreme love to Christ is indispensably necessary, because without it we could not possibly be happy in heaven. This, my friends, is capable of strict demonstration. You will allow that no man can be happy who is where he does not wish to be. No man can wish to be in a place where he is separated from all that he loves. But the man who does not love Christ, would find nothing in heaven to love; would find himself separated from all that he loves. All the objects which he ever loved, all the pursuits, employments, and society in which he ever found pleasure, he leaves behind him when he leaves this

world. He would, therefore, feel like a stranger in heaven; he would look back to this world as his home; he would wish to return here, for where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also; and as that wish could not be gratified, he would not be happy. But this is not all. To a man who does not love Christ, the society and employments of heaven would appear exceedingly disagreeable. We have already seen that such a man cannot enjoy the society or cordially unite in the devotions of Christians on earth. For similar reasons, he would find it still more difficult to enjoy the society, or join in the praises of heaven. All who reside there love the Saviour perfectly. They feel and express for him the most ardent and intense affection. Their happiness very much consists in seeing, serving, and praising him. Now what happiness could be found in such society and employments, by a man who does not love the Lord Jesus? You well know that nothing can be more irksome, than to praise what we do not admire; to express ardent affection, when we feel the most perfect indifference. Yet this would be the situation of one in heaven, who does not love his Redeemer. He must, through endless ages, praise what he does not admire, and profess love which he does not feel; and what is still worse, he must utter these praises and professions to one who knows their insincerity. It would be sufficiently painful to flatter one whom we do not love, even if we could deceive him by our flatteries, and induce him to believe we were sincere. But to flatter one whom we cannot deceive; to stand and utter lies to him, while we are conscious that he knows them to be lies, this would be misery indeed. But it is needless to enlarge. Nothing can be more evident than the fact, that a man who does not love Christ supremely would be unhappy in heaven. Indeed every such person, who is at all acquainted with his own heart, must be conscious of the fact. You doubtless recollect the unhappy man who was executed in this town for murder, about ten years since. While in his dungeon, after listening to the description which inspired writers give of heaven, he told me that he should rather remain in that dungeon through eternity, than go to such a heaven as he had heard described. Now I appeal to those of you who do not love the Lord Jesus, whether your feelings are not in some degree at least similar to his? If you hesitate to admit this, permit me to make the following

supposition. Suppose some town in our country should be made, as nearly as possible, to resemble heaven. Suppose all the inhabitants without exception, to be, not only pious, but eminently so. Suppose all worldly amusements, all political discussions, all commercial transactions, all secular conversation, to be banished from among them; while the presence of Christ should be enjoyed in a peculiar manner, and all the employment should be to love and praise and serve him? Would you joyfully choose that town, in preference to all other places, for your earthly residence? Could you, while retaining your present character, while destitute of the love of Christ, cheerfully leave every thing behind, and live happily in such a place? If you reply, No, then is it much more evident that you could not be happy in heaven. If you reply, Yes, we could be happy in such a situation, — I ask, why then do you not, so far as is possible, live such a life of religion here? Why are not those who appear to love Christ most sincerely, and to praise him most ardently, your chosen companions? In a word, if you could be happy in heaven, why do you not seek happiness by living a heavenly life on earth?

From what has been said you may learn, my hearers, why the inspired writers lay so much stress on the exercise of love to Christ; why he requires it of all his disciples. It is not for his own sake. It is not because our love can add any thing to his happiness. But it is because that, unless we love him, we are destitute of goodness, and of all love and desire for goodness; and are unable to obey his commands, to enjoy communion with his people, or to be happy with him in heaven. The commands which require us to love Christ are not then mere arbitrary commands; but are founded in the nature of things, and obedience to them is necessary.

From this subject we may learn,

1. In what respects many characters highly esteemed among men are deficient, essentially deficient, in the sight of God. I allude to persons whose dispositions appear to be amiable, whose morals are correct, whose religious opinions are perhaps agreeable to truth, and who pay a decent respect to religious institutions. Can you not easily conceive, my friends, that a man may possess all these qualities and yet be destitute of love to Christ? Do you not know among your acquaintances many

persons who have pleasing manners, amiable dispositions, and who live moral lives, and yet do not appear to feel any love to Christ? Are there not some such persons among your acquaintances, whom you would be surprised to hear speaking of the Saviour with affectionate warmth, or expressing grief for having neglected him, or urging others to love him? Do you not perceive that a great alteration must take place even in these moral, amiable persons, before they can sincerely adopt the language, in which Paul and other primitive Christians express their affection for the Saviour; and still more, before they can cordially unite with the redeemed in crying, Worthy is the Lamb to receive glory, and honor, and power, and blessing? If so, you surely cannot blame us for asserting that something more than morality is necessary; that a man may be what is called a good moral man, and yet be no Christian; and that a radical change of heart is necessary to moral men, as well as to immoral and profane. Nor will you complain if, adopting the language of the poet, we exclaim,

> "Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Lamb!
> Thou Maker of new morals for mankind;—
> The grand morality is love of thee."

The young ruler mentioned in the gospel appears to have possessed all the qualities mentioned above; but yet he lacked one thing, essential to his Maker's approbation, and his own happiness.

2. Is the question in our text the great important question which Christ addresses to all, and on our ability to answer which satisfactorily every thing depends? Permit me, then, to address this question to every one who wishes to ascertain the reality of his title to an admission into Christ's visible church, to an approach to his table, to the heavenly inheritance. Does any one present wish to know whether he is prepared for admission to the visible church? Christ, who keeps the door, says to him, Lovest thou me? If thou dost, enter freely. Does any one already in the church, who has lost his first love, or practically denied his master, wish to know whether he is forgiven, whether, notwithstanding this conduct, Christ will make him welcome to his table? The only question to be answered is, Lovest thou me? And if any one wishes to know whether he

is prepared for heaven, the question is still the same. Will you say, it is impossible for any one to answer this question decisively? It appears from our text, that this is a mistake. Peter could say to his heart-searching Lord, when his penetrating eye was fixed full upon him, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. If Peter could thus certainly know, and confidently assert, that he loved Immanuel; all who sincerely love him may say the same, unless their love is so faint that they cannot perceive it. And O how happy is the man who can truly say this! With what delight must he approach Christ's table! With what confidence can he meet death! with what triumphant joy may he join with the Apostle in exclaiming, — I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.

SERMON LXXXVIII.

THE CHARACTERS WHOM CHRIST LOVES.

I love them that love me. — Proverbs viii. 17.

These are the words of Christ. He who is styled the Word of God in the New Testament, calls himself the Wisdom of God in the Old. Under this character he is represented as standing in the public places of resort, and soliciting the attention of all who pass by: Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men. The motives which he sets before them to induce a compliance with his call are numerous and powerful. In the first place, he claims their attention on account of the endless duration of his existence. I was set up, says he, from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When God prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the deep; when he gave to the sea his decree, when he appointed the foundations of the earth; then was I by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. In the next place, he claims attention on account of the dignity and excellence of his character: Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign and princes decree justice; even all the judges of the earth. In the third place, he urges them to listen to his instructions because of their excellence, plainness, truth and utility: Hear, for I will speak of excellent

things; my mouth shall speak truth. All the words of my mouth are in righteousnes; they are all plain to him that understandeth. Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. In the fourth place, he urges them to love and obey his voice by promises on the one hand, and threatenings on the other: Blessed are they that keep my ways; for riches and honor are with me, yea durable riches and righteousness. I cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors; for whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord; but he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death. Lastly, he urges them to love him on account of his long attachment to mankind, and his readiness to reciprocate affection; I was ever rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men. I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me. The love which Christ here professes to entertain for those who love him, is an affection of a peculiar kind, entirely different from that general love which he feels for all his creatures; and infinitely more desirable. There is a sense in which he loves even his enemies. He loves them with a love of benevolence, a love which leads him to mourn over them when they obstinately refuse to comply with his invitations. Thus we are told that, while on earth, he was grieved with the hardness of their hearts; and wept over rebellious Jerusalem, when he contemplated the miseries that were coming upon her. He also loves the holy angels with a love of complacency and delight because they bear the image and obey the will of his Father. But the love which he entertains for his people, is an affection of a still more tender and peculiar kind; an affection, the nature and extent of which can be learned only from a consideration of the causes which produce it. To state these causes, or, in other words, to show why Christ loves those who love him, is the principal object of the present discourse.

1. The foundation of that love which Christ feels for all who love him, was laid in eternity. All who now love him, together with all who ever will love him to the end of time, were given

to him by his Father before the foundation of the world; to be his peculiar people. God promised him in the covenant of redemption, that if he would make his soul an offering for sin, he should have a seed and a people to serve him; and that his people should be made willing in the day of his power. No sooner were this people given to him, than he loved them with a peculiar love; for he who calls the things that are not, as though they already were, can love creatures who were not, as if they were already in existence. Suppose, my friends, that when God promised a son to Abraham and Sarah, twenty-five years before his birth, he had given them a picture containing an exact likeness of this son. Would they not have immediately begun to love this picture of their future offspring; and would not their affection and their desire to see and embrace him have increased with every succeeding year? Something like such a picture of his future spiritual offspring, Christ has possessed from the first moment in which they were promised him by his Father. Their names are all written in his book of life; and their image has been ever present to the eye of his mind from that period to the present time. Hence, long before they love him, nay long before they begin to exist, they are beloved by him with a strong and tender affection, or as the prophet expresses it, with an everlasting love. Their image has so long dwelt in his mind, and so long been the object of his affectionate contemplations, that they have become, as it were, a part of himself, and he can no more cease to love them than he can cease to exist. All who are thus loved by Christ, because they are given him of his Father, will sooner or later return his affection; for, says he, all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For these he prays. I pray for them, says he, I pray not for the world but for them whom thou hast given me. These he will bring in. Other sheep, he said to his disciples, I have who are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice. These he will keep. My sheep, says he, never perish. My Father who gave them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. Thus he knows his sheep, loves them, prays for them, and resolves to bring them home to his fold, before they love or know him.

2. Christ loves those who love him, because he has done and suffered so much for their salvation. You need not be told, my friends, that we naturally love and prize any object in proportion to the labor and expense which it costs us to obtain it. How highly then must Christ prize, how ineffably must he love his people. How dear did their salvation cost him. He purchased them with his blood. To win their love and effect their redemption, he exchanged the height of glory and felicity for the depths of wretchedness and degradation. At an infinitely less expense he could have created thousands of worlds. Nor is this all. From the birth to the death of his people, he watches over them with unremitting attention. Every hour and every moment, they need and experience his watchful care. He forgives their sins, alleviates their sorrows, sympathizes in their trials, heals their backslidings, wipes away their tears, listens to their prayers, intercedes for them with his Father, enables them to persevere, and accompanies them through the valley of the shadow of death. All this care and attention naturally tends to increase his love for them. If a shepherd becomes affectionately attached to a flock, which he has long fed, guided and protected; if a mother loves, with increasing tenderness, a sick child who, for a long period, needs her pity and care; with what an inconceivable strength of affection must our great Shepherd love his sheep for whom he has done and suffered so much, and whom he feeds, guides and protects with such unceasing vigilance in their journey through the wilderness of this world? If his love was originally sufficiently strong to bring him from heaven to earth, and carry him through such an unparalleled series of toils and sufferings, what must it be now, when he has so much more cause to love them? If it was stronger than death, even before he died for them, who can conceive of its strength since he has arisen and reascended to heaven?

For this, among other reasons, his love for them must be greater in degree, and of a different kind from that, which he entertains for the angels of light. He loves them, indeed, but he never died for them; he never sympathized with them in affliction; he never watched over them for years with unceasing attention, nor led them by the hand through such a world as this. He loves them, as a parent loves a child that enjoys vig-

orous and uninterrupted health; but he loves his people, as parents love a child that has often been sick, and at the point of death. He loves them, as the father in the parable loved his elder son who had ever been with him; but he loves his people as the same father loved the returning prodigal, who was dead and alive again; who after being lost was found. And perhaps we are warranted, from this parable and those which precede it, to conclude that there is more joy in heaven over one of our fallen race who repents, than over ninety and nine of these blessed spirits who need no repentance.

3. Christ loves those who love him, because they are united to him by strong and indissoluble ties. That a most intimate and lasting union subsists between Christ and his people, is evident from numerous passages of Scripture. This union is sometimes compared to that which subsists between the bridegroom and the bride. Fear not, says he to his church, for thy Maker is thy husband. Sometimes it is compared to the union between the branches and the vine. I, says he to his disciples, am the vine; ye are the branches. Sometimes it is shadowed forth by the connection between the head and the members. Christ, says the apostle, is the head of the church, and we are members of his body, his flesh, and his bones. In other places it is compared to the union between the soul and the body. Ye, says St. Paul to believers, are the body of Christ. And again, he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Lastly, this mysterious union is described in still stronger terms by our Saviour as resembling that which subsists between himself and his Father. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, says he, dwelleth in me and I in him. To the same purpose he prays, that all his disciples may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. The expressions here employed to describe this union are the strongest which language can afford, and sufficiently show that it must be a union of the strongest and most intimate kind. The bond of this union, on our part, is faith; but the union itself is formed by the appointment of God, who has constituted Christ and his people one great body, and by the Spirit of Christ which dwells in the hearts of all believers. As the numer-

ous branches of the vine are one with the root, because the same vital principle is common to both; or as the different members of our bodies are one because they are actuated by the same soul, so Christ and his people are one, because the same infinite Spirit dwells in them all and binds them together. Hence the afflictions of the church are called the afflictions of Christ; and hence we are told, that in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and that whoever touches them touches the apple of his eye. How strong then must be the love of Christ for his people! They are not only his brethren, his sisters, his bride, but his members, his body; and he consequently loves them as we love our members, as our souls love our bodies. Nothing can be stronger than the language of St. Paul on this subject. No man, says he, ever hated his own flesh, but loveth and cherisheth it even as the Lord does the church; plainly implying that we may as soon cease to love and cherish our bodies, as Christ to love and provide for his people.

4. Christ loves those who love him, because they possess his spirit and bear his image; in one word, because they are holy. Similarity of character always tends to produce affection, and hence every being in the universe loves his own image whenever he discovers it. Even children become more dear to their parents, when they resemble them; and our nearest relations are beloved with increased affection, whose dispositions and opinions and pursuits correspond with our own. Especially does Christ love his own image in his creatures, because it essentially consists in holiness, which is of all things most pleasing both to his Father and himself. But all who love Christ bear his image. He has no children or friends who do not resemble him; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, created anew after his image in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness. And though the image of Christ in his people be at first imperfect, yet the love which they entertain for his person and character, constantly tends to increase the resemblance, since we naturally imitate those whom we highly love and revere. By contemplating his glory, as displayed in the gospel, they are gradually changed into the same image from glory to glory. They love what he loves; they hate what he hates; they pursue the same objects that he pursues. They are not of

the world, even as he is not of the world. They learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart, and to cultivate that charity which seeketh not her own. Like him their principal concern is to glorify God and finish the work he has assigned them. Like him they pity, forgive, and pray for their enemies; and like him they are tenderly solicitous for the salvation of sinners. In a word, Christ, as the apostle expresses it, is formed in them. And as those who love Christ will obey his commands, and as he commands his disciples to be perfect even as their Father in heaven is perfect, so they are constantly aiming at a perfect conformity with this perfect pattern.

That this conformity to his image and obedience to his commands, are pleasing to Christ and excite his affection, is evident from his own language. I have not called you servants, says he, to his disciples; but I have called you friends; and then are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. The fruits of holiness thus produced by his people on earth, imperfect as they are, are on some accounts more pleasing to him even than those produced by the angels in heaven. Holiness in heaven is like flowers in spring or like fruit in autumn when they are expected; but holiness in a world so depraved as this is like fruit and flowers in the depth of winter; or like the blossoms and almonds of Aaron's rod, which proceed from a dead and sapless branch. When the delicious fruits of southern climes can be made by the gardener's skill to flourish in our northern regions, they are far more admired and prized, than while growing in rich abundance in their native soil. So when holiness, whose native land is heaven, is found in the comparatively frozen and barren soil of this world, which lieth in wickedness, it is viewed by celestial beings with peculiar pleasure and agreeable surprise.

Lastly; Christ loves those who love him, because they rejoice in and return his affection. It is the natural tendency of love to produce and increase love. Even those whom we have long loved on account either of their relation to us, or of their amiable qualities, become incomparably more dear to us when they begin to prize our love and return it. Hence it is easy to conceive that Christ loves his people because of their love to him. And if he so loved them before they existed, and even while they were his enemies, as to lay down his life for their redemp-

tion, how inexpressibly dear to him must they be, after they become his friends! To this, the apostle alludes when he says, if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. It is indeed utterly impossible to conceive the immeasurable extent of his love to those who are thus reconciled to him. Well might the apostle say, it passeth knowledge. He feels none of those jealous fears respecting the sincerity of his friends, which men are prone to entertain, and which often interrupt their friendship for each other.

No; he knows that his people love him, and he knows how much they love him. He knows that he is precious to their souls, more precious than the air they breathe, than the light of heaven. He knows that they love him better than father or mother, husband or wife, brother or sister, son or daughter, yea far better than their own lives; and that for his sake they are ready to renounce and forsake them all. He knows that his love sweetly constrains them to live to his service, and that they rejoice when they are counted worthy to suffer pain and shame for his name. He knows that they look upon him as their Redeemer, their Friend, their Shepherd, their Physician, their Advocate, their Wisdom, their Strength, their Life, and their All; that the enjoyment of his presence and favor constitutes all their felicity; that they consider no earthly affliction comparable to his absence or displeasure, and that the weakness of their love to him is their constant grief and shame. He knows that they prefer him to themselves, that they wish for a heavenly crown only that they may throw it down at his feet; and that the principal reason why they desire heaven is, that they may see and serve and praise him, and ascribe all the glory of their salvation to him. And how then can he refrain from loving those who thus love him; whom he has himself taught to love him. With what unutterable emotion of mingled pity, sympathy and love must he look down on those who are thus attached to him in the midst of a rebellious world, and who for his sake are denying themselves, taking up the cross and striving to follow him in defiance of all the inward and outward opposition which they are called to encounter? Hear what he says to such I know thy works. I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength;

and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee in the hour of temptation which shall come on all the earth, and I will cause thine adversaries to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Thus have I attempted to state the principal reasons why Christ loves those who love him. He loves them because they are given him by his Father; because he has done and suffered much for their salvation; because they are united to him in the most intimate and indissoluble manner; because they possess his spirit and bear his image; and because they rejoice in and return his affection. Either of these causes alone would induce him to love them with a strength of affection, of which we can form no conception. What then must be the degree of love produced by all these causes united? He only can tell, who knows the Son even as the Son knows him. The love of Christ passeth knowledge. Its heights and depths, its length and breadth, are unsearchable by finite minds.

Improvement. 1. This subject may enable every one to answer the important question, does Christ love me? This is a question which all true Christians will frequently, and anxiously ask, and which many of them feel unable to answer in a satisfactory manner. When they consider the spotless purity of Christ, and his hatred of sin, and their own exceeding sinfulness and unworthiness, they are ready to exclaim, how is it possible that he should love us? O that he were on earth, that we might ask him this question, or that some kind angel would favor us with a glimpse of his book of life, or assure us that we are the objects of his love. But these wishes are needless. Say not in your hearts, Who shall ascend up into heaven, to ask whether Christ loves us; for the answer to this question is near you, even in your hearts. If you love Christ he loves you. If you are his friends, he is most certainly yours. Were he now on earth, and should you ask, Lord, canst thou condescend to love us? he would answer your question by another, and say as he did to Peter, Lovest thou me more than these worldly objects round you? Look into your hearts then, my friends, for an answer to this question. Can not some of you reply, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Thou knowest that, notwithstanding our coldness, our ingratitude, and numberless

imperfections, the desire of our souls is still to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name? If you dare not say this, can you not venture to say, we know that Christ is just such a Saviour as we need; the way of salvation by him is exactly suited to our circumstances; we know that his yoke is easy, and his burden light; and that it appears to us above all things desirable to obey his commands, and imitate his example; we know that we love all who love him and bear his image; and that it gratifies us to hear him praised and extolled; we know that his presence alone renders us happy, and that in his absence nothing affords us consolation? My friends, if you can truly say this, you need not wish for Christ to come and assure you of his love. He has already done it; he has done it in the words of our text; and you may feel more assured of it than if you had heard it asserted by a voice from heaven. Unworthy as you are, he loves you infinitely more than you can conceive; and will continue to love you while eternity shall last. Away, then, with your doubts and anxieties. Dismiss every fearful anxious thought; listen not to the suggestions of unbelief, but believe the words of Christ, and open your hearts to admit the consoling entrapturing assurances of his love. Come to his table, as to the table of a friend, who will give you a cordial welcome, and not as to the table of a master of whom you are servilely afraid? Why should you hesitate or fear to do this? Do you not invariably find that, when you feel the fullest assurance of his love, you are most engaged in his service; and that, on the contrary, when you doubt it, your hands are weakened, and your hearts discouraged! If this be the case, it is at once your duty, your interest, and your happiness to believe, to be certain, that you love Christ, and that he loves you; and in proportion as you believe this, will be your progress in the Christian race. This St. Paul well knew, and therefore, when he wished Christians to be filled with the fulness of God, he prayed that they might know the love of Christ. If any of you still doubt, and wish for more satisfactory evidence, the preceding observations may teach you how to obtain it. In proportion as your love to Christ increases, so will your evidence of his love to you increase. All your doubts arise from the weakness and inconstancy of your love. Labor and pray, therefore, that your knowledge of Christ may be increased, and his love shed abroad in your hearts

Thus will you soon be enabled to say with Peter, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

2. If Christ loves those who love him, then he will love those most who are most ready to return his affection, and to do all things, to suffer all things for his sake. My Christian friends, do you wish for a large share of Christ's love; for a distinguished place in his affections? Then instead of shrinking from the cross, press it to your hearts, and like the first disciples rejoice when you are counted worthy to suffer for him. Afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions, are the honors and preferments of Christ's earthly kingdom; for if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him; and the greater our sufferings, the brighter will be our crown, the more exalted our thrones. Every one who forsakes father or mother, wife or children, houses or lands, for Christ's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and in the world to come, everlasting life. Be not contented then with giving Christ few and small proofs of your affection; but labor to love him as he has loved you, and be as willing to suffer for him, as he was to suffer for you. Should you love him more than all the saints and angels, his love would still infinitely surpass yours. Be persuaded then to give him all your hearts. Are you not sometimes ready to wish that you had a thousand hearts to give him, a thousand tongues to speak his praise, a thousand hands to labor in his service? And will you then withhold any part of what you already possess? No; give him all, for all is infinitely less than he deserves; and the more you give him, the more will you receive.

3. How happy are they who love. It has been often and justly observed, that to love, and to be beloved by a deserving earthly friend affords the greatest happiness which the world can give. What happiness then must they enjoy, who love and are beloved by the infinite fountain of love,—God's eternal Son, the brightness of his glory, the possessor of all power in heaven and earth; source of every thing amiable and excellent in the universe. What pure, ineffable, exalted delight must they find in communion with such a friend; and what indescribable benefits must they receive from his love! What can created minds conceive of, what can the heart form a wish for, beyond the friendship of such a being? Nay, what creature could have dared to raise his wishes so high, had not God himself encour-

aged us to do it? O, it is too, too much; not too much indeed for God to give, but far too much for man to deserve. But in vain do we attempt to give you adequate ideas of the happiness resulting from the love of Christ. It is one of those things, which it is impossible for man to utter; and the joy which it produces is a joy unspeakable. If any would know it, they must learn it, not from language, but from their own experience, for language sinks under the weight of a subject, which it was never intended to describe. We can only say that, to love and be beloved by Christ, is the very essence of heaven.

4. The truths we have been considering afford most powerful motives to induce sinners to love Christ. Benevolent, pitiful, and compassionate as he is; he cannot, at present, my impenitent hearers, but view your characters with abhorrence and disgust. Even now he looks round about upon you with anger, being grieved for the hardness of your hearts. He knows that you do not love him, He sees that you do not comply with his invitations, or obey his commands. He seldom if ever, hears a prayer from your lips. He sees that you refuse to comply with his dying request, that you are even now about to turn away from his table, where his people commemorate his dying love. How then can he love you. How can he but be displeased and grieved, to see himself and the blessings he offers thus slighted and despised. Still, however, he waits to be gracious. He once more sends you terms of reconciliation. And what are the terms? He requires your love. Be his friends, and he will be yours. And can you hesitate respecting a compliance? Shall infinite loveliness offer to love perfect deformity, and shall perfect deformity refuse to love infinite loveliness? My friends, think again of his offers. Are they reasonable? Are they not more than reasonable? Even your fellow worms will not love you unless you return their love. And can you then expect, that your offended Creator and Redeemer, the King of kings and Lord of lords, will love you on easier terms; will love you while you persist in grieving, neglecting and provoking him? My friends, you ought not to expect this. You cannot expect it. Will you not then comply with his terms? Look at him again. You will find his portrait, his likeness, the very picture of his heart in the gospel. Study it attentively. See what majesty and meekness, what dignity and

tenderness; what glory and condescension, what grace and sweetness, there is in every feature. See infinite power, unsearchable knowledge, unerring wisdom, boundless goodness,—see all the fulness of the Godhead, veiled in flesh and coming down from heaven to win your affections. This is he who says, I love them that love me. My friends, how can you forbear to love such a being. Methinks you could not but love him though hell should be the consequence. How then can you refuse, when heaven will be the reward.

SERMON LXXXIX.

THE SAFETY OF RELIGION.

He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.—Proverbs x. 9.

The term walk, as used by the inspired writers, signifies a course of conduct. To walk uprightly, then, is to pursue a course of uprightness, or integrity. Our text assures us, that he who pursues such a course walketh surely. He walks safely, for he is safe while pursuing such a course; and safety, or eternal salvation, will be the end of it. He may therefore walk confidently, or with an assurance of present safety, and of final salvation. If any proposition of a religious nature be demonstrably true, it is this. It is demonstrably true, that God is righteous. It is demonstrably true, that, possessing this character, he must regard the righteous with approbation and complacency; or, as an inspired writer expresses it, The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; for he cannot but approve of his own character; he cannot but love his own image in his creatures. And it is demonstrably true, that those whom he loves and approves must be safe here, and happy hereafter. We may, therefore, consider it as a most certain and well established truth, that he who walketh uprightly walketh safely.

But here a question arises, and a difficulty occurs. What is it to walk uprightly? It is well known, that various opinions are entertained respecting this question, and that different persons answer it in a very different manner. Now how shall we ascertain which of these various opinions is correct? And unless

we can ascertain which of them is correct, of what service is our text? What does it avail us to know that he who walketh uprightly, walketh safely, unless we can ascertain what it is to walk uprightly? My hearers, if I am not greatly deceived, our text will assist us in surmounting this difficulty. If it is true that he who walketh uprightly walketh safely, then it must be true that he who walks safely, walks uprightly. If then we can ascertain which is the safe course, we shall ascertain which is the upright course. If we can ascertain who walk safely, we shall ascertain who walk uprightly. It will, therefore, be my object in the following remarks, to show which is the safe course, or who walk safely.

Every religious course, whether right or wrong, safe or unsafe, includes two things; first, the doctrines which are believed; and secondly, the precepts which are obeyed by those who follow it. In other words, it includes sentiments, and conduct or practice. It will be proper to consider these two things separately. Let us then inquire,

I. What sentiments are safe, or what we may safely believe.

In answer to this inquiry we may remark,

1. It is safe to believe that the Scriptures are a revelation from God, and that those who wrote them were inspired. This, it is presumed, no infidel will deny. No infidel will pretend that we expose ourselves to any evil, or danger, in a future state, by believing the Scriptures to be the word of God, even though it should prove that they are not so; for believing them does not lead to the neglect of any duty, which infidels regard as necessary to the attainment of future happiness. Allowing then, for argument's sake, that they should prove not to be a revelation from God; those who believed that they were so, will still stand on as safe ground, as those who rejected them. It is then safe to believe the Scriptures. But it is not safe to disbelieve them; for if they are the word of God, all who do not receive them as such, will perish. And no one will deny that it is possible they may be the word of God. No one can, with the least shadow of reason, pretend, that it is not probable they are so. A book which thousands of the learned and the wise, after a thorough examination, have received as a revelation from heaven, must, surely, have at least probability in its favor. Its claims must be supported by proofs of no common strength. Taking the infidel,

them, on his own ground, it is by no means safe to reject the Scriptures. He who rejects them is far from walking safely.

2. It is safe to believe in the immortality of the soul, and in a future state of retribution. This assertion requires no proof; for it is impossible that any future evil or danger should result from believing these doctrines, even if they are not true. If the soul is not immortal, if there is no future state, they who believed, and they who disbelieved these doctrines, will alike cease to exist at death. On the other hand, it is not safe to disbelieve these doctrines. Even those who disbelieve them must allow, that they may possibly be true; nay, that there is some probability of their truth. And if they are true, the consequences of disbelieving them will be terrible; for he who does not believe that his soul is immortal, will take no care of it; and he who does not believe in a future state of retribution, will make no preparation for it, and will, of course, die unprepared. He then who disbelieves these doctrines does not walk safely.

3. It is safe to believe that men are naturally destitute of holiness, or, in other words, wholly sinful. No one, it is presumed, can point out any danger, either present or future, to which a belief of this doctrine exposes men. The Scriptures caution us against every danger to which we are exposed; but they never intimate that there is any danger of entertaining too low an opinion of ourselves. On the contrary, they give us this caution, Let no man think of himself more highly than he ought to think. It must, I conceive, be acknowledged by all, that we are far more disposed to form too high, than too low an estimate of our own characters; that we are more in danger of being too proud, than we are of becoming too humble. Even then if we were not wholly sinful, it would be erring on the safe side to believe that we are so.

But it is by no means equally safe to embrace the opposite opinion. Most awful threatenings are denounced in the Scriptures against all who do not repent of, confess, and renounce their sins. But he who does not believe that he is entirely sinful, will not feel that repentance, nor make those confessions, which a belief of this doctrine would produce, and which the Scriptures require. Besides, if it is true that men are naturally destitute of holiness, it follows, that he who disbelieves this truth, mistakes something for holiness which in fact is not holiness;

and a mistake respecting this point must be fatal. If a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. And is there not, at least, some probability, that the doctrine is true, even its enemies themselves being judges? Do not the inspired assertions, that men are dead in trespasses and sins, that if one died for all then were all dead, that the heart of the sons of men is full of evil and madness, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; I say, do not these, and other similar assertions, with which the Scriptures abound, seem to mean that men are entirely sinful? Do they not make it at least probable that they are so? Now if there is the least probability that such is the fact, it is safe to believe it, unsafe to deny it. To believe it, if false, can do no harm. To disbelieve it, if true, will be fatal.

4. It is safe to believe that a moral renovation, or change of heart, is necessary to salvation. No harm can result from believing this doctrine, even if it is not true. But much harm, fatal harm must result from disbelieving it, if it is true. The man who does not believe that a new heart is necessary will give himself no concern respecting its attainment. He will live and die without it. Of course, if it is necessary to salvation, he will not be saved. And is it not possible that it may be necessary? Nay, is it not probable? If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. Do not these, and the numerous other passages of the same import, which are found in the Scriptures, seem to teach that a great moral change or renovation is necessary? Do they not render it probable that it is so? Surely then, it cannot be safe to disbelieve it? He who disbelieves it cannot walk safely.

5. It is safe to believe in the proper divinity of Jesus Christ. Some may deny this assertion, on the ground that if Christ is not God, to worship him as such, will involve us in the guilt of idolatry. But whether he is or is not God, it is certainly our duty to worship him. We are commanded to honor him even as we honor the Father; and we are told that when the Father brought him into the world, he said, Let all the angels of God worship him. If it is the duty of all the angels to worship him, much more, we may conclude, is it ours. We may add, that though prophets, apostles, and angels always checked and re-

proved those who attempted to worship them, our Saviour, even during his state of humiliation on earth, frequently received worship from men as his due. Nor among all the cautions which are given us in the Scriptures, is there the least intimation that we must beware of loving and honoring Christ too much, or that there is any danger of placing him too high. Indeed, it would be strange if there were such intimation, for why should we be cautioned against worshipping one who is worshipped in heaven, and who shares with his Father the praises of its inhabitants? In fine, if it is safe to obey God, to imitate the apostles, to utter the language of heaven, then it is safe to worship Jesus Christ. And if it is safe to worship him, it cannot be unsafe to believe that he is God. You cannot suppose that any man will be condemned at the judgment day, for thinking too highly of his Saviour, or loving and honoring him too much. But if Christ is God, it is by no means equally safe to disbelieve that he is so. If the doctrine of his proper divinity is true, it must be a fundamental doctrine, a doctrine the belief of which is necessary to render us Christ's. This, Dr. Priestley, the great apostle of Unitarianism, has acknowledged. If you are right, said he to a distinguished clergyman in this country, who believed our Saviour's divinity; if you are right, we are not Christians at all, and I do not wonder in the least at the bad opinion you entertain of us. And is there not at least a probability that those who believe Christ's divinity are right? Do not many inspired passages appear to assert it in the most unequivocal terms? And since no evils can result from believing it, even though it should not prove to be true, while the most terrible evils will be the consequence of disbelieving it, if it is true, is it not the safer and wiser course to believe it? Does not he who believes it walk safely?

6. It is safe to believe that Christ has made an atonement for sin, and that we must be justified by faith in him, and not by our own works. From a belief of these doctrines rightly understood, no evil or danger can result, even if they are not true. It has indeed been asserted, that these doctrines are unfavorable to morality, but the assertion is groundless; for all who believe that we are justified by faith in Christ, believe that this faith will produce good works, and that a faith which does not produce them, cannot be genuine. They believe that good

works are as necessary to our salvation, as if we were actually justified by performing them. In fine, they believe that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. This being the case, it is impossible that their reliance on the atonement and righteousness of Christ should make them negligent of moral duties. Nor can it be shown, that the belief of these doctrines occasions any other evil, or exposes them, either here or hereafter, to any danger. It is then safe to believe them, even if they are not true. But it is very unsafe to disbelieve them if they are true. A mistake respecting the terms of acceptance, the way of salvation, must be fatal, if any mistake can be so. Those who make the mistake, incur the guilt, and expose themselves to the fate of the Jews, who, being ignorant of God's righteousness, went about to establish their own righteousness, and thus failed of salvation. One of the most zealous advocates of the doctrine, that we are justified by our own works, after writing a large volume in support of it, concludes with this remarkable concession, "Nevertheless, since we are prone to estimate our good works too highly, and fancy that they are sufficient for our justification, when in fact they are not so, the safer way is to renounce all dependence on them, and rely on the righteousness of Christ alone."

Finally; It is safe to believe that all men will not be saved, and that without repentance, faith and holiness none will be saved. To prove this, little need be said. If the doctrine that all men will inherit salvation is true, those who deny, are as safe as those who believe it. If it is not true, those who trust in it trust to a lie, and will utterly perish in their own deceivings. And even its warmest advocates must allow, that there is at least a possibility of its proving false. No man then walks safely who ventures his soul, his all, upon its truth.

Thus have I attempted to show who pursue a safe, and who an unsafe course, so far as doctrines, or sentiments are concerned. I shall now proceed, as was proposed,

II. To pursue the same inquiry with respect to practice. In attempting this, however, we cannot descend to particulars. The precepts of revelation, are so numerous, that it is scarcely possible, in a single discourse, to mention them all. Nor is it necessary to our present design. It will be sufficient to remark, that, with respect to practice, all who are called Christians, may

be divided into two great classes. Of these two classes, one is distinguished by a strict, the other by a lax interpretation of the divine precepts. The former suppose that these precepts are to be understood and obeyed in their plain, obvious sense. The latter contend that, understood in this sense, it is impossible to obey them; and that it is therefore, necessary to explain away much of their apparent meaning, and bring them more nearly to a level with the inclinations and pursuits of mankind. The former suppose, that we must obey them, though obedience should displease our friends, draw upon us contempt and reproach, and expose us to sufferings and losses. The latter seem to think, that we are to obey them so far only as is consistent with our temporal interest and convenience. The former consider the salvation of the soul as the one thing needful, and religion as the great business of life. They suppose that it is our duty to be continually under its influence; and whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God. The latter contend, that we are not required to be so very religious, that there is no need of feeling much concern respecting our spiritual and eternal interests, and that we are not forbidden to indulge in what the world calls innocent amusements. Hence a corresponding difference is found to exist between the conduct of these two classes. The latter allow themselves in many things which the former consider as forbidden, sinful, and dangerous. The latter are conformed to this world; the former are not so. Hence they have in all ages been censured and ridiculed as precise, superstitious, bigoted, and morose; while the other class has been complimented for its liberality, and freedom from narrow views and prejudices. Now the question before us is, Which of these two classes pursues the safe course? Which is most dangerous, — to have too little religion, or too much? And on which side are we most tempted, and most prone to err? My hearers, the bare statement of these questions renders an answer needless. You all know, that we are naturally prone, not to go beyond our duty, but to fall short of it. You know, that all the temptations to which we are exposed exert their influence on the same side. There is nothing to tempt us to be too religious. There are a thousand things which tempt us to rest satisfied with too little religion. On this side, then, our danger lies. On this side only do we need a

guard. Besides, how can any man be too religious? How can any man go beyond the precepts which require him to love God with all his heart; to do every thing to his glory; to renounce every thing which causes him to sin; though dear as a right hand or a right eye; to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts; to deny himself, take up the cross, and to be holy as God is holy? How can any man be more humble, prayerful, thankful and heavenly-minded than the Scriptures require him to be? And even if it were possible to do more than our duty, could any harm result from doing it? Would God punish a man for being too religious, for loving him too well, and serving him too faithfully? Did you ever hear of a man who, on his dying bed, repented of having paid so much attention to religion, or who expressed any fears that God would be displeased with him, on account of his zeal and devotion? Did you ever hear of a man's saying, in such circumstances, Were I to live my life over again, I would be less strict and scrupulous than I have been, in obeying the divine commands? On the contrary, do not even the most pious, reproach themselves, in a dying hour, for their deficiencies; and say, were we to pass through the world again, we would strive to be more faithful and more devoted to God? Surely then, there is no danger of being too religious. Surely the strict course is the safe course. Even if those who pursue it go farther than is absolutely necessary, yet their salvation is sure. In a word, they are safe, even if their opponents are right. But the same cannot be said of the opposite course. If the former are right, the latter are fatally wrong. Though it is not easy to conceive of a man's having too much religion, we can easily conceive of a man's having too little. Though it is impossible to believe, that any one will be punished for going beyond what God requires of us, it is very possible that many may be punished for falling short of it. He only, then, who walks strictly, walks safely.

Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum. He that walks uprightly, walks safely. Of course, every one who walks safely, walks uprightly. The safe course is the upright course. Which is the safe course, we have attempted to show, with respect both to sentiment and practice. We think no one will assert, we are sure no one can prove, that the course which has been described is not safe. And if it is safe, it is

right; for rectitude and safety are inseparably connected. Will you not all be persuaded then, to adopt this course? Will you not embrace sentiments which, even allowing they are not true, can expose you to no danger, but which, if true, cannot be rejected without exposing you to destruction. Does any one reply, The course which you have described, though it may be safe, is not pleasant. If it does not lead to unhappiness hereafter, it must render those who walk in it unhappy here? I answer, all who have made trial of it, deny this assertion, and those who have not, make it without any knowledge of the subject. But allowing for a moment, that this course is attended with some present unhappiness; can this afford the shadow of a reason for exposing ourselves to everlasting wretchedness? No man, who really believes that he has an immortal soul, that he is an accountable creature, will assert that it does. Indeed, every man who pays any regard to the dictates of wisdom or prudence, will say, It is folly, it is madness, to incur the smallest risk of everlasting wretchedness, for the sake of any temporal advantage whatever. If there is only a bare possibility that the threatenings of God's word will be executed, nothing shall tempt me to pursue a course which may bring them upon my head. Whatever I lose, I will not place my soul at hazard. If any course is safe, I will pursue it, cost what it may.

It has probably already occurred to you, my hearers, that the course which we have now described is the same which has often been recommended to you from this place. It is a course which we can recommend to you with full confidence. We are under no apprehensions that any of you will complain of us in the other world, or at the judgment day, for having recommended this course. We are under no apprehensions that you will then say, we required of you more than God requires, or represented the way to heaven as narrower than it really is. If you have then any cause of complaint, it will be that we did not press you with greater earnestness and importunity to walk in this way.

To you, my Christian friends, who are pursuing the course which has now been described, the preceding remarks are unnecessary. You need no additional arguments to convince you, that the course you have adopted is both right and safe. It may, however, sometimes afford you pleasure in a dark hour,

to reflect, that the system of doctrines and practice which you have adopted, includes every thing which is valuable in all other systems, together with many distinguishing excellencies peculiar to itself. If any are safe, you are so. If any religious system is right, yours is right. But if yours is right, all others are wrong. Hold fast your confidence, then, to the end. Be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

SERMON XC.

A DISSUASIVE FROM AMBITION.

Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not; for behold I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord; but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey.—JEREMIAH XLV. 5

In a preceding chapter, we are informed, that God directed Jeremiah to write in a book all the warnings and threatenings which he had previously uttered, that they might be read to his countrymen on a public occasion, in the temple. In compliance with this command, he employed Baruch, a young scribe, to write what he dictated; and as he was himself confined in prison, and of course unable to go to the temple, he sent Baruch, when the book was finished, to read it in the audience of the people, on a day of public fasting and prayer. The king was not present on this occasion, but he was soon informed of the transaction, sent for the book, caused it to be burned, and directed his officers to apprehend Baruch, probably with a view to put him to death. From this he was preserved by a special interposition of providence; but still the duty which he had performed, at the prophet's request, exposed him to much inconvenience, loss and suffering. He was obliged to conceal himself for a time, and of course to leave his business, to live in obscurity, unnoticed and unknown, and to lose many opportunities

for acquiring property, and of rising in his profession. These losses and inconveniencies, though incurred in the service of God, appear to have deeply and painfully affected him. He had not yet learned, like the apostles, to rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer pain and shame for God's name. Though there is sufficient reason to believe that he was truly religious, yet he was young, and not established in religion; his faith was scarcely sufficient to support him under the trial, and he too nearly resembled the persons mentioned by our Saviour, who were offended when they found themselves exposed to trouble and persecution on account of the word. Indeed, he seems to have been naturally of an ambitious, aspiring disposition, and this disposition was not yet sufficiently subdued and humbled by divine grace. Hence God saw it necessary to reprove and admonish him by the mouth of the prophet. The message which he sent him is recorded in this chapter: Thus saith the Lord to thee, O Baruch! Thou didst say, woe is me, for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow. In my sighing I fainted, and find no rest. Now thus saith the Lord, behold that which I have built I will break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up; and seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not; for behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh; but thy life will I give thee for a prey, in all places whither thou goest.

My friends, we are all too much influenced by a covetous, ambitious and aspiring spirit. We are all naturally prone to seek great things for ourselves in this world; and even real Christians, while they are young in religion, and their faith, like that of Baruch, is weak, are often too much influenced by this propensity. Hence, when they are required to deny themselves, to make sacrifices and submit to losses and disappointments for Christ's sake; when they listen to some of the rules which he prescribes, they are sometimes almost ready to faint, like Baruch, and to say, if we must act in this manner, how can we pursue any worldly business advantageously, or even obtain subsistence for ourselves and families? To all such persons, to all who are indulging a covetous or aspiring temper, our text affords a necessary admonition. In it, God says to every member of his church, and in effect to every individual present, Seekest thou great things for thyself in this world? seek them not.

In discoursing on this passage I propose to show,

I. When we may be said to seek great things for ourselves.
II. Why we should not seek them.

I. When may we be said to seek great things for ourselves? It is easy to answer this question in general terms. It is obvious to remark, that we seek great things for ourselves, when we indulge a grasping, ambitious, aspiring disposition; a disposition which is never contented or satisfied, which still cries give, give. But it is not easy to give a particular and definite answer to the question before us. The words, great and small, are relative terms; for in this world, nothing is either great or small but by comparison. What would be great to one man, might be small to another. What would be little to a king, would be great to a beggar. It is therefore difficult to give an answer to the question before us, which will accurately apply to all the various cases and situations that are to be found in society. We may however observe,

1. That men are guilty of seeking great things for themselves, when they seek a larger portion of worldly good than is necessary. But still the question returns, how much is necessary? If men were to answer this question, they would soon prove that few or none are guilty of violating the command in our text; for they all pretend that they seek no more than is necessary. But by this term they usually mean all that would be necessary to gratify their sinful inclinations and desires. The proud and covetous think that an independent fortune is necessary. The ambitious regard honor and power as necessary. The sensual and voluptuous consider the means of pampering their appetites as necessary. The vain think splendid habitations, furniture, dress and equipage necessary. But in order to determine what is necessary, we must appeal from appetite and passion to right reason; from misjudging men, to the infallible word of God. These judges will inform us, that to a creature situated as man is, those things only are necessary, which are necessary to the great end of our creation, the end of our existence. Now man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever; or, in other words, to obey God's will and receive his everlasting favor. More than this, no man needs; more than this no man ought to seek. Every thing which does not assist us in performing our duty, in preparing for death and heaven, is needless. Much more is every thing needless, which serves only

to gratify our sinful propensities. Now neither riches, nor honor, nor power, nor the applause of men, is necessary to assist us in performing our duty, or in preparing for a happy eternity. They have no tendency to procure the favor of God or to assist us in seeking it. On the contrary, they often prove hindrances; for it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. All that we need, then, all that is really necessary, is such a daily supply as is requisite to the support of our bodies, and as may free us from the temptations which result from the pressure of poverty. Agreeably, our Saviour forbids us to lay up treasures on earth, or to be anxious for the morrow; and his apostles exhort us, having food and raiment, to be therewith content; and to make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lust.

A further confirmation of this remark may be drawn from our Lord's prayer. He doubtless there teaches us to pray for every thing necessary. And what is the language which he teaches us to utter, respecting the supply of our wants? Give us this day our daily bread. The man then, who cannot bring his desires within the compass of this prayer, the man who seeks more than Christ allows him to pray for, seeks great things for himself.

Similar remarks may be made with respect to honor and power. We are not allowed to wish for or seek a higher station than that which the providence of God allots us. On this point the apostle's language is very strong and explicit. In his day every servant was a slave. Yet he says, Art thou a slave? Care not for it; but if thou mayest be free, that is, if God in his providence gives thee an opportunity to regain thy liberty, in a lawful manner, use it rather; for, he adds, he who is called, being a slave, is the Lord's freeman, and he who is called being free, is the Lord's servant. The import of these and other similar precepts evidently is, that we ought to regard our station in life with holy indifference, as a matter of no consequence, and to make it our only concern to perform with fidelity the duties of that station, whatever it may be, since in the sight of God, all stand upon the same level; and he that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. These precepts do not, however, forbid us to receive either wealth or power, or any other temporal blessing, when, without our seeking them, the providence of God bestows them upon us; for every creature of

God is good and not to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. Indeed, we may safely consider and ought to consider his providence as determining what is and what is not necessary. What he gives, we may consider as necessary, and what he withholds we may be sure is unnecessary. Our duty is to desire no more than he gives, and in whatever state we are, therewith to be content; knowing both how to be abased and how to abound.

But it is necessary to remark,

2. That we seek great things for ourselves in the sense of the text, when we seek them for ourselves only, or seek them merely with a view to self-gratification or self-aggrandizement. In this consists the very essence of the sin forbidden in our text. It is not unlawful for any man to seek great things, provided he does not seek them for himself. It is not unlawful to seek wealth in the use of proper means, if our object in seeking it is merely to increase our usefulness and our opportunities of doing good, by relieving the necessities of others, and contributing to promote the interests of religion; and if we really devote to these purposes all that portion of our acquisition which is not necessary to ourselves.

So far, indeed, is it from being unlawful, that it is our duty to do this, to improve our talents to the utmost, and to do all the good in our power. Hence Paul commands us to labor, that we may have something to give to him that needeth. But to seek great things for others, is very different from seeking them for ourselves. The man who seeks any thing for himself alone, violates the spirit of the command in our text, whether the objects of his pursuit be great or small. He shows that he is not actuated by that charity which seeketh not her own. He exposes himself to the charge which God brings against his ancient people: Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit to himself. He acts inconsistently with the character of a Christian, as described by St. Paul. None of us, says he, liveth to himself. Even Christ pleased not himself. We may add, that there is danger of seeking great things for ourselves, even when we fancy that we are seeking them for others. Covetousness and ambition may conceal themselves under the garb of benevolence, and we may flatter ourselves that we seek wealth or influence merely with a view to promote the happiness of others,

when in fact we are seeking them for the sake of gratifying ourselves.

Let us now proceed to consider,

II. Some of the reasons why we should not seek great things for ourselves.

At the head of these reasons we might place the divine command. We might say, seek not great things for yourselves in the world, because God has forbidden it. He not only forbade Baruch to do it, but he forbids us all to do it. His word is full of commands, cautions, and warnings, all levelled against the pursuit of earthly things. Some of these commands and cautions we have already had occasion to mention, and we shall still have occasion to mention others. We shall therefore only add here, that, since God forbids us to seek great things for ourselves, it is highly sinful to do it; and if it be sinful, it is dangerous; dangerous here, and destructive hereafter. Every consideration, then, which can be assigned as a reason why we should avoid sin, why we should obey God, is a reason why we should not seek great things for ourselves. But we wish to show you, not only that God forbids this, but why he forbids it; and thus convince you that it is not a cruel or arbitrary prohibition, but a most reasonable one.

1. We ought not to seek great things for ourselves, because it is the sure way to multiply our disappointments and sorrows. This it is easy to prove. It is evident from the past history, and from the present state of the world, that however eagerly you may seek great things, very few of you will obtain them. In the very nature of the case, few can obtain them. In the lottery of life there are few prizes, and many blanks. He, then, who seeks great things for himself, engages in a pursuit in which it is exceedingly probable he will be disappointed; and the more ardent are his desires, the more eager his pursuit, the more keen will be the sufferings which his disappointment will occasion. Now is it wise for any man to hazard his happiness, in a pursuit where there is so little probability of success, where hundreds fail, while one succeeds.

But this is not all. The man whose pursuit is crowned with success, will be no less disappointed than his unsuccessful neighbor. After he has obtained great things, he will find himself as far from happiness, find his desires as unsatisfied, his mind

as discontented, as before. His desires will increase with his success. Nay, they will increase much faster than his success. Objects which seemed great before they were obtained, will appear small after he obtains them; and he must still toil on, like a man who is endeavoring to fill a vessel which has no bottom, or who attempts to quench his thirst by drinking the briny waters of the ocean. And should the tide of success turn, should one who has acquired great things lose them, an event which very frequently occurs, how keen, how insupportable are the pangs of disappointment? Who, my friends, are the men that find life a burden too heavy to bear? who seek a momentary oblivion of their sorrows in the gulf of intemperance? who madly put an end to their lives by violence? Those who have sought great things for themselves, and been successful in the pursuit.

My friends, I presume you seek great things for yourselves, only with the expectation of obtaining happiness. But what is happiness? who is the happy man? Is it not he who thinks he has enough; whose possessions are equal to his desires? There are, then, only two ways of obtaining happiness. One is to increase our possessions till they satisfy our desires. The other is to bring down our desires to our possessions. The first is evidently impossible. No man ever did satisfy his desires by increasing his possessions, nor can any man do it, for our desires are boundless. To attempt to satisfy them in this way, is like attempting to extinguish a fire by supplying it with fuel. The only way to be happy, then, is to bring down our desires to our possessions. This can be done, for it has been done. There has been at least one man who could truly say, I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. And if we wish to be happy, either here or hereafter, we must learn the same lesson. If we cannot be contented and satified with the portion God allots us, we must be miserable, in whatever world or situation we may be placed. Witness our first parents. They possessed the whole world, possessed it when it was adorned with all its pristine glory and beauty. But they were not satisfied. They sought great things for themselves. They wished to be as gods, knowing good and evil; and by attempting to gratify the wish, they lost every thing, and ruined themselves with all their posterity. Witness, too, the fallen angels.

They possessed more than the world. They possessed heaven. They were raised as high as creatures could be raised. But they were not satisfied. They wished to rise higher. They attempted it, and fell; fell into a gulf of misery which has no bottom, into a state of misery which has no end; fell from the highest state in which creatures can be placed, to the lowest depth of degradation to which creatures can sink. Thus will all perish who seek great things for themselves; for omnipotent truth has declared that every one who exalteth himself shall be abased.

2. Another reason why we should not seek great things for ourselves, may be drawn from the nature and situation of the world in which we live. We live in a changeable world, where nothing is stable, where nothing is certain; where every thing is changing, or dissolving, or passing away; a world, which with all its works, is destined to be burned up, and from which we must soon be removed. And is such a world a suitable portion for immortal beings; a proper place in which to lay up treasures, or on which to rest our hopes? Might we not as easily employ our time and exertions in building upon a quicksand, or upon ice which the summer's sun will melt away? Again, the world in which we live is a sinful, and of course a dying world, which lies in wickedness, under its Maker's curse, on which the vials of his wrath are constantly poured out, and from which thousands are daily swept away to the retributions of eternity. We live in a prison, where rebels against heaven's King are awaiting their sentence; in a place of execution, where fire and sword, pestilence and famine, disease and death, have for ages been employed in executing the sentence of God's law upon transgressors; in a grave yard, where lie buried the many successive generations of sinners, upon whom the sentence has been executed. We live, surrounded by the dying and the dead; we walk over the ashes of the departed; we build our habitations upon their graves; we strive to enrich ourselves with treasures which they have left behind; treasures for which many of them bartered their salvation, and which are, therefore, the price of blood, the blood of immortal souls. We live in a world in which multitudes of intelligent beings are daily commencing their existence, an existence which is never to end; in which still greater multitudes are constantly ripening for

heaven or for hell; and from which thousands are daily going to one or the other of those endless abodes. And is such a world a proper place in which to seek great things for ourselves? Can the fires of avarice or ambition glow in the midst of so many things which are calculated to extinguish them? We sometimes read of wretches, who, when a city is wrapped in flames or overturned by an earthquake, rush among the blazing ruins, or the falling houses in search of plunder. We read of others, who follow the march of armies, and hover around a field of battle, with a view to strip the bodies of the dying and the dead. We wonder at their insensibility; but alas! my friends, our conduct, while we seek great things for ourselves, in such a world as this, proves that we are equally insensible. We rush on in the mad pursuit of worldly objects, surrounded by dangers, diseases and death, with the earth trembling, and the grave ready to open under our feet. We follow in the rear of an immense army of our fellow creatures, who have all advanced to grapple with the king of terrors, and have all fallen in the unequal combat. We are hastening to encounter the same enemy, with an assurance of meeting the same fate; yet we eagerly seize the spoils which the dead have left scattered on the field of battle; we are ready to contend and quarrel for their possessions, and take no means to prepare for the contest in which we must soon engage with the last enemy, who will strip us of all we have so hardly and laboriously acquired.

My hearers, what folly, what madness, what inexcusable want of feeling, what an awful insensibility, does such conduct evince! What! can we find nothing better, nothing more necessary to do, in such a world as this, than seeking great things for ourselves? Have we no children, no friends, no acquaintances, who are in danger of perishing, whom our prayers, our example, our exertions might be instrumental of saving? What, O what, would have been our fate and the fate of mankind, had our Saviour, had his apostles passed through the world, employed only in seeking great things for themselves?

Permit me to enforce these considerations by reminding you, that God himself mentions them, in his address to Baruch, as a reason why he should not seek great things for himself. Thus saith the Lord, I will break down what I have built up, and pluck up that which I have planted; for behold, I will bring

evil upon all flesh. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not. As if he had said, Dost thou, a member of a sinful race, an inhabitant of a guilty, ruined world, a world on which my judgments are about to descend; dost thou, thus situated, seek great things for thyself? Art thou thinking of pleasure, or wealth, or honor, while I am overthrowing and plucking up and destroying, and such multitudes are perishing around thee? Entertain such thoughts no more, but let it suffice thee if thou canst thyself escape.

3. Another reason why we should not seek great things for ourselves, may be found in our own character and situation. We are not only placed in a sinful, dying world, but we are ourselves sinful, dying, and accountable creatures. We are by nature and practice children of disobedience, and of course children of wrath. God is angry with us every day; the curse of his broken law rests upon us; and death, in a thousand forms which we can neither foresee nor resist, is constantly ready to arrest and hurry us to his tribunal, where a sentence awarding eternal death or everlasting life, will be pronounced upon each of us. We have, therefore, a great work to do, no less a work than securing the favor of God, and obtaining the salvation of our immortal souls, a work which demands our time, our attention, our utmost exertions. And can we, in such a situation, find leisure or inclination to seek great things for ourselves here? to seek them while death is at the door; while the Judge is at hand; while eternity draws near; while our souls, unprepared, are in momentary danger of sinking beyond the reach of hope or mercy? Shall we, instead of diligently preparing to give in our account to God, labor to increase our responsibility by increasing those possessions for which an account must be given? Alas! my friends, however small our possessions may appear to us now, we shall all think them large enough, and too large, when we are called to account for them at the tribunal of God.

But perhaps some may reply, we hope that our preparation for death is made, that our sins are pardoned, that our salvation is secure? But are you sure that this is the case, sure that you are not deceived? If not, you have still a great work to do, a work, the performance of which requires all diligence; and that is, to make your calling and election sure. Will any one reply,

they are sure, I know them to be so; I have a full assurance of salvation. And is this a reason why you should seek great things for yourselves? What! has a pardoned rebel, a rebel who deserves the deepest hell, a rebel rescued from that fate by a Redeemer's blood, by sovereign grace, has he nothing to do but to seek great things for himself? nothing to do for the Saviour, who has bought him with a price? nothing to do for the honor of that God who has freely pardoned and made him an heir of eternal glory? Nay, have you not yet something to do to accomplish your own resolution? Are you not commanded to work it out with fear and trembling, to fight, to run, to endure to the end, to be faithful to death; Have you not also something to do, much to do, to promote the salvation of others? Are there none perishing within your reach, whom you might, whom you ought, to attempt to save? And even if there were not, even if you had nothing to do for your Creator, your Redeemer, or your fellow creatures, could you find no better employment than seeking great things for yourselves here on earth? Does it become a child of God, an heir of heaven, an expectant of celestial, immortal glories, to grovel here in the dust, instead of looking upward, commencing his eternal song, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God? Are you so ambitious that you cannot be satisfied to live and reign forever at Christ's right hand, unless you can be honored and applauded here? Are you so avaricious, that you cannot be satisfied with immortal, incorruptible treasures, unless you can have a mass of glittering dust in addition? Are your desires so unreasonable that you cannot be contented with sharing the inheritance of Christ, with possessing such a portion as the infinite, eternal God; is it not enough that he has pardoned you, saved you, rescued you from hell, raised you to heaven, given his Son to die for you, his Spirit to sanctify you, and himself to be your exceeding great reward? Will you ungratefully forget all these favors, and murmur, repine, or be discontented because he does not also give you great things in this world, things which he knew would prove injurious? Indeed, my friends, indeed, whether we are penitent or impenitent, pardoned or unpardoned, it by no means becomes us to seek these things. We have all something else, something of more importance to do, something which it will require the greatest diligence, our utmost exertions to accomplish.

4. Another reason why we should not seek great things for ourselves is, that seeking them is incompatible with the duties which we are required to perform; and of course incompatible with our best interests. It is not enough to say, that seeking them is not the end for which we were created, not the work which we are required to perform; for it is directly opposed to that end, it is inconsistent with the performance of that work. Man has but one soul, but one heart, but a certain limited portion of time, strength and energy. Of course, he is capable of a certain limited degree of exertion. He cannot then give his heart to God and to the world at the same time. To use our Saviour's language, he cannot serve two masters, cannot serve God and mammon. If he serves the latter, he must hate the former. In short, he who seeks great things for himself, is covetous; we are assured that every covetous man is an idolater, and that he has no part in the kingdom of Christ. And as an allowed, indulged desire of great things for ourselves, is utterly incompatible with religion, so the smallest desire for such things is highly injurious to our religious progress and enjoyment; for so much of his heart as any man gives to the world, so much he must withhold from God. So much of his time, strength and energy as are employed in forming worldly objects, must be subtracted from religious pursuits, from the performance of his duty. The more concerned he feels to lay up treasure on earth, the less concerned he must be to lay up treasure in heaven. The more he thinks of the body, the less attention he can pay to the soul. In a word, no man can pursue two objects with the same zeal, energy and success, as he can pursue one; least of all can he do this, when these objects are diametrically opposite to each other. Now in this case, the objects of pursuit are diametrically opposite, as opposite as light and darkness, as sin and holiness; for a disposition to desire, or seek great things for ourselves, is in every degree in which it can exist, sinful, since it proceeds from a sinful source.

What is it, my hearers, which prompts you to seek great things for yourselves? It must be either avarice, or ambition, or pride, or a wish for sensual gratification. Now these, as I need not inform you, are all sinful propensities, and by obtaining great things, these sinful propensities are gratified and strengthened, and, of course, your religious progress is inter-

rupted. Nor is this all. A desire for great things exposes us to innumerable temptations. Indeed, it is this desire which gives worldly objects all their power to tempt and entangle us. The man who does not desire great things, will feel no temptation to do wrong in order to obtain them, or to avoid doing right, through fear of losing them. But he who desires to do great things will be perpetually tempted to omit duty, and to commit sin. They that will be rich, says the apostle, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many hurtful and deceitful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

On this part of our subject it would be easy to enlarge, and to multiply reasons why we should not seek great things to ourselves. But the undesigned length of the preceding remarks renders it necessary to omit them, and conclude with a brief improvement.

Permit me, then, to improve the subject by asking each of you, in the language of God to Baruch, Art thou seeking great things for thyself? You may perhaps reply, No, we seek but little, we seek for a competency. But are you not deceived? You may now fancy that a little more would satisfy you, but would not your desires increase with your possessions? The only way to arrive at the truth is to ascertain whether you are contented with what you have; for if you are not, you would still be discontented were all the treasures of the earth poured into your coffers. The man who seeks more than God sees it best to give, the man who is discontented with what God has given him, certainly seeks great things for himself. And is not this the character of some, of many present, of some even among the professed disciples of Christ? Are not some of you, notwithstanding the express prohibition and commands of your Master, seeking great things for yourselves? Are you not doing it knowingly and allowedly, almost without suspecting it to be sinful? Are you not in fact seeking as much as you can obtain, placing no limits to your desires, but rather gratifying them, and suffering them to increase? My hearers, it is time, high time, that our eyes were opened to the sinfulness and danger of this conduct. It is astonishing that we do not see it, or that seeing it, we are not alarmed. We should be alarmed were we guilty of murder, or theft, or perjury? Why then are we not alarmed at finding ourselves guilty of a sin which is expressly forbidden,

and which is as inconsistent with the Christian character, as robbery or murder? A sin, which the law of God and the gospel of Christ unite to condemn? Do you never read such passages as these: Thou shalt not covet; labor not to be rich; labor not for the meat that perisheth; lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth; If any man will follow Christ, let him deny himself; They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts; love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. One would infer from our conduct, that these passages were no part of the Bible; but, my friends, they are a part, and a most important part of it, as we shall all one day be convinced, if we neglect them. Indeed, it is to the neglect of these passages that the declining state of religion among us, and all the evils which affect us, as a church, and as *individuals*, are to be ascribed; nor can religion flourish either in the church, or in our own hearts, any farther than the spirit of these passages prevails. O then, strive to imbibe their spirit. Guard against seeking great things for yourselves, as you would guard against any atrocious crime, as you would guard against an enemy which has injured more Christians, and destroyed more immortal souls than all other enemies.

SERMON XCI.

CHRIST'S MISSION AND RETURN.

I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.—JOHN XVI. 28.

No words, uttered by our Saviour during his residence on earth, appear to have given his disciples greater satisfaction than these. He had just before said to them, A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go unto the Father. This declaration they did not understand; and, though desirous to ask an explanation, were either afraid or ashamed to confess their ignorance. Our Saviour however perceived what was passing in their minds, gave them unasked the desired explanation, and ended by saying, I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples answered, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. They believed this truth indeed before; but their faith was so much increased by this conversation, that it appeared to them as if they then believed for the first time, and as if their former belief was scarcely deserving of the name.

It must indeed be acknowledged by all, as the disciples remarked, that our Lord here speaks plainly. No one can pretend that there is any thing figurative or hyperbolical; that there is

any proverb or dark saying in the words, I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. Here every thing is plain, simple, intelligible. Let us, then, attend to their import. They will not, perhaps, teach us any new truths; but they may possibly cause us, as they did the disciples, to believe more firmly, truths which were known before.

First. We learn from this passage, that our Saviour existed in a most exalted and happy state before his appearance on earth. He was then with the Father; or as another passage expresses it, in the bosom of the Father. The same truth is elsewhere taught with at least equal clearness. In the first verse of this book we are told, that he was in the beginning with God. And in the prayer which immediately follows this chapter, he says, Father, I come to thee; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. Unless we suppose that he could utter falsehood, even in an address to heaven, we must then believe that he not only existed with the Father, but that he possessed glory with the Father before the world was made. And what was he then? He was not a man; for he became man, when he was born into our world. He was not an angel; for an apostle asserts, and brings many arguments to prove, that he was not. Unto which of the angels, he asks, did God ever say, as he did to Christ, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. But if he was not a man, not an angel, what was he? Let inspiration answer. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Nor did he cease to be God, when he became man. No, he was God manifest in the flesh, God over all blessed forever. But this leads us to remark,

Secondly. Our Saviour teaches us in these words, that from this pre-existent, exalted, happy state in the bosom of the Father, he came into our world. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. This truth also is, in other places, largely insisted on both by himself and his apostles. In several passages he says, expressly, I came down from heaven. Being in the form of God, says an apostle, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the

likeness of man. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, his own creatures, his own world, but his own received him not.

THIRDLY. Our Saviour here teaches us that, when he left this world, he went back to his Father, or to heaven from whence he came. The truth of this declaration, so far as human eyes could see it, his disciples afterwards saw. They saw him ascend up visibly toward heaven, till a cloud received him out of their sight. And what they could not see, the Spirit of God revealed to them. He assured them that their Master had entered into heaven, and was seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in the world to come.

The view which has been taken of the import of our text, brief as it is, opens a wide field for serious and instructive meditation. Indeed it is connected more or less intimately with every fact and doctrine of Christianity. To some of the reflections which it most naturally suggests, your attention is now requested.

1. It is obvious to remark, that the events mentioned in this passage are, both in themselves and in their consequences, by far the most remarkable which have occurred in our world since its creation. Indeed the creation of the world itself was an event far less wonderful. That a being possessed of infinite wisdom, power and goodness, should create a world, or many worlds, is nothing very wonderful or surprising. But that, after he had created it, and after its inhabitants had revolted from him, he should visit it, — visit it in a human form, in the likeness of sinful flesh; that he should enter it, not as the Ancient of days, but as an infant; live in it, not as its Sovereign and Proprietor, but as a servant, a dependant on the bounty of his own creatures; and above all, that he should die in it, die in it as a malefactor, on a cross, between two thieves; that this earth should not only have been pressed by its Creator's footsteps, but wet with his tears, and stained with his blood; these are wonders indeed, wonders which would be utterly incredible, had not God himself revealed them; wonders which will still be

regarded as incredible by all, who forget that God is wonderful in working, and that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. No wonder that angels should desire to look into these things. No wonder that they left heaven in multitudes to visit our world when their Creator and their Lord lay an infant in a manger. No wonder that raptures and ecstacies unfelt before swelled their bosoms, and called for new songs to express them. The wonder is, that man, stupid, insensible man, should be no more affected by this event; that he should regard it without interest, and almost fall asleep while he hears it described. It is not thus, when events comparatively trifling solicit his attention. Let the king of Great Britain visit his Irish and Scottish dominions, and the world rings with it. Let the President of these States come among us, and every house pours out its inmates to welcome or to gaze. Let a comet blaze athwart the sky, and thousands of sleepless eyes are open to watch the ethereal stranger. But let the Creator, the Eternal Sovereign of the universe, by whom and for whom all things were made, come in the most interesting form, to visit this rebellious province of his dominions, and how few are found who even trouble themselves to ask whence he comes, or what is his object; how much fewer to give him the welcome which he had a right to expect! My hearers, how strange is this: and how strange it is, that we cannot see and blush at our own stupidity. Why is this event, which will cause the name of our world to resound through the whole created universe of God, and to be had in everlasting remembrance, regarded with such indifference? This world itself will soon with all its works be burnt up. Its place in the heavens will know it no more. Not even a wreck will remain to remind future orbs that here once rolled the planet called Earth; and its very existence would at length fade away from the memories of all, except its former inhabitants! but the fact mentioned in our text, will preserve its name from oblivion, and through eternal ages it will be remembered as the world which its Creator visited, and for which he died. And for similar reasons its inhabitants, the posterity of Adam, will be objects of intense interest and curiosity to holy beings through interminable ages. Show me a man, show me one of that race for which my Creator died; show me one of those

whom he redeemed by his blood, will, we may suppose, be one of the first exclamations of all who, through the ages of eternity, shall from various parts of Jehovah's dominions enter heaven; and when they wish to see what sin can do; when they wish to behold it in its most dreadful effects, in its blackest forms, they will turn and contemplate, with shuddering wonder, those who perished in consequence of neglecting this great salvation, and receiving this unparalleled grace of God in vain. These, they will exclaim, were some of the inhabitants of that highly favored world. And how could the inhabitants of such a world perish? How could they resist such love, such mercy, such a bright display of all the divine perfections, as was exhibited to them! How could they break through so many sacred obligations, resist the influence of so many most powerful motives, and win their way to hell over the body of a crucified Saviour! of such a Saviour too as died for them? My hearers, if, as our great Teacher assures us, much will be required of those to whom much is given, it seems certain that the responsibility, the sinfulness and the guilt of those who perish after hearing of what Jesus Christ has done and suffered for them, will be greater than those of any other creatures! for surely, without intending to limit God we may venture to say, that he never will, that he never can do more for any race of beings than he has for ours.

But it is not sufficient simply to contemplate this great event, wonderful as it is. We must look also at the motives which prompted it. Indeed when we see the Creator leaving his native heaven, the bosom of his Father, descending into our world, assuming, and suffering in our nature, we are naturally led to ask, what motive impelled him? what object could in his view be of sufficient importance to induce such humiliation, such suffering as this? It must have been a great object, a powerful motive, which could have induced him to visit our world, even had he come in the form of God. But how much greater must have been the object, how much more powerful the motive, which induced him to visit it in the form of a servant, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to die as a malefactor. What could induce him to exchange heaven for earth, the bosom of his Father for the body of an infant, the celestial throne for a manger and a cross, the adoration of angels for the scoffs and insults of men? It evidently could be no personal object, no selfish mo-

tive, no motive such as those, by which we are naturally actuated. It could not be to gain any thing for himself; for he already possessed all things, and he knew that, by coming into our world, he must sustain a temporary loss of almost every thing dear to him. It must then have been for others, and not for himself, that he came. And it was for others, it was for us. He came to be the light of the world. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to save his people from their sins. He came to redeem them from the curse of a violated law, by bearing it in their stead. He came to die, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us back to a forsaken God. In a word, he came to rescue immortal souls, beings capable of containing inconceivable happiness or misery, from moral blindness, and sin, and guilt, and death, and hell; and to open a way by which they might ascend to the heaven from which he came, but whose gates their sins had forever barred against them. Such was the object for which the Creator did and suffered all this. And, O, how puerile, how trifling do the grandest objects of human pursuit, and the most splendid human enterprizes appear, when compared with this! All succeeding ages have combined to admire and extol Columbus, embarking to seek, over a pathless ocean, a then undiscovered quarter of the globe. But what was this in comparison with our Saviour's descent from heaven into the grave to seek a lost, to bring back a wandering, to save a ruined, self-ruined world? This was indeed an enterprise for a God.

But still the question returns, if this was the object, what was the motive? Why did he wish to save such a world? He needed it not. He could have made a thousand worlds at less expense. And he had every reason to abhor and renounce our race, both on account of what they had done, and on account of the manner in which he foresaw they would treat himself. My hearers, there was but one motive, but one principle in his breast, sufficiently strong to prompt him to this; and that principle was, love, pure disinterested love. And now I have mentioned its name, many of you will not understand me. You cannot conceive of such love, because you never felt it. According to a trite and homely, but just remark, you judge of others by yourselves. When you hear of missionaries leaving their native country, and going to spend their days among the heathen,

among savages, far from all the enjoyments and conveniences of civilized life, some of you can scarcely believe that they are prompted by love, love to the souls of men whom they never saw. Many of you probably suspect, that they are secretly actuated by some more selfish motive. How then can you expand your narrow views sufficiently to grasp, to comprehend that immeasurable love which Jesus Christ displayed in his mission from heaven! The Christian, in whose breast a spark of the same celestial fire has been kindled, can conceive something of it; but those who are destitute of this love, as all impenitent sinners are, form no conception of it, and hear of the love of Christ, and of all its astonishing effects with a kind of stupid amazement, or with perfect indifference. But, my hearers, whatever any of you may think of it, all the love which was ever felt on earth, and all that was ever felt by angels, could it be collected into one bosom, would be as nothing compared with the love which Christ displayed, and would leave that bosom cold in comparison with the fervor which glowed in his breast. His love was a love like the deluge of Noah, such a love as we might expect could be displayed, when the windows of heaven were unstopped, the fountains of its great deeps broken up, and all its treasured stores of love poured down at once upon us. To think of such love is like trying to think of existence which has no beginning, or of power which makes something of nothing. Tongue cannot describe it, finite minds cannot conceive it, angels faint under it, and those who know most of it can only say with inspiration, that it passeth knowledge.

2. The appearance of such a person as Jesus Christ in our world, gives us an appalling view of the moral state and danger of its inhabitants. If it was necessary that such a being should come from heaven to save us, our situation must be deplorable indeed. How dark for instance, how black, must have been that night of ignorance which nothing less than the descent of the Sun of Righteousness from his celestial sphere could illuminate. How strong must have been those bands of sin, which none but an Almighty deliverer could break. How incalculably great must have been that guilt, for which nothing but such a sacrifice could atone. In a word, how incurable, how desperate must have been the spiritual maladies of our race, when such a

physician was necessary to heal them, and when even he could find no remedy sufficiently efficacious but his own blood! Well may we say, with an apostle, that if one, if such an one, died for men, then were men dead. My hearers, it is not those passages which speak of the blindness of the human mind, the desperate wickedness of the human heart, and the vast amount of human sinfulness and human guilt, that give me the most appalling views of our situation. No, it is the means which were thought necessary by infinite wisdom to save us from that situation. I know that God would not leave heaven for a slight cause. I know that the Creator would not be born, and suffer, and die, unless some most tremendous exigency demanded it. And when I am told that the situation of man was so hopeless, so deplorable, as to render such means necessary for his deliverance, then, then I view our situation as terrible indeed. I see the dreadfulness of our fate in the means employed to rescue us from it. My hearers, you would in other cases, reason in a similar manner. Were either of you sick, and should your friends at a vast expense send to a great distance for a most skilful physician, you would conclude at once, that they considered your disease as exceedingly dangerous; your fears would be excited, and you would readily submit to every means which might possibly effect a cure. Why then, when you see, not a prophet, not an angel, but the eternal Son of God, the Creator, Upholder, and Governor of the world, sent from heaven to cure you, will you not reason and act in a similar manner? Why not say, if my own merits, if a man, if an angel could have saved me, Jesus Christ would never have come forth from his Father into this world to do it. Why not believe that there is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby you can be saved. And why not receive thankfully, and at once, this great Physician, and submit to the means of cure which he prescribes? Remember that if you neglect to do this, you will, you must be left in that awful situation, and exposed to that tremendous doom from which Jesus Christ came to save sinners. Remember, that that doom will be awfully aggravated by your neglect of such a Saviour. Remember that, if you reject him, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. To-day, then, if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts.

That you may be induced to do this, permit me to remind you,

3. Of the certainty which attends every truth revealed to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. You sometimes say, at least in your hearts, no man has ever returned from the other world to give us any information of what awaits us there, or even to assure us of its existence. We cannot then be certain that there is another world, or a day of judgment, or a heaven, or a hell. If indeed one would rise from the dead, and assure us that he had seen and known all these things, we might believe. But, my hearers, something far more satisfactory than this has been done. Not a man merely, but the Son of God, our Creator, our future Judge, has come from the other world to this, on purpose to reveal it to us, to bring life and immortality to light. He came directly from the bosom of his Father, and is therefore, intimately acquainted with all his counsels and designs. He came from that very heaven which he revealed to us; and lest we should refuse to give him credit, he by his miracles fixed the broad seal of heaven to his doctrines. Lest even this should be insufficient, the eternal Father, by an audible voice from heaven exclaimed, This is my beloved Son: Hear ye him; that is, yield full credit to all which he reveals; yield implicit obedience to all his commands. And how much better, how much more satisfactory is this, than would be the report of some fallible mortal, returning from the other world, who might be deceived himself, or wilfully deceive us. My hearers, if you will not yield to this evidence, if you will not believe the Lord Jesus Christ who came from heaven, and is returned to heaven, most certainly you would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. You must however do as you please; but for us, I speak in the name of all his real disciples, until you can show us a better, a more infallible Teacher, we must and will follow him. Nor are we ashamed to avow our faith. No; we exult and glory in it. We triumph while we point to the strong foundations of our belief, and build upon them our eternal hopes. We can look up and say, to our ascended Saviour, Lord, we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. And we know experimentally the truth of the apostle's assertion, He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; a witness, which cannot deceive him. Tell us not

then of the vain opinions, the endless conjectures of ignorant, fallible, short-sighted men, groping in midnight darkness. Tell us not of conjectures, when we have certainty. Every thing which Christ has revealed respecting the other world, is fixed, established, certain. It is no longer a matter of doubt or dispute. We rely upon it, as if we had ourselves visited the other world, and seen all which he reveals. We venture our all upon it. We renounce things which we have seen for things which we have not seen; and while we believe, we find our Saviour's declaration verified, I am come a light into the world, that he who believeth in me should not walk in darkness but have the light of life. Hence too, we firmly believe that he will again visit our world as its Judge, that to them who look and wait for him he will appear the second time without sin unto salvation. He has assured us that he will, and we can rely confidently upon his word. Nor is it, even humanly speaking, one half so improbable that he will come the second time, as it was that he would come the first. It appears far less astonishing that he should come as God to judge the world, than that he should come as man to die for the world. And being assured that he did come once, we feel assured that he will come again. Meanwhile in obedience to his commands, we will, by eating of this bread and drinking of this cup, assist in showing forth his death till he shall come.

4. How real, how accessible, and how near to us, my Christian friends, does heaven appear, viewed in the light of this subject. When we hear our Saviour, our Head speak of coming from heaven into this world, and returning from this world to heaven, it is like hearing a friend speak of going to Europe and returning home. We have as much reason to regard heaven as a reality, as we have to regard Europe as a reality; nay we have more, for surely our Saviour's testimony is more satisfactory, more infallible, than that of all the men who ever returned from Europe. And as our Saviour returned to heaven, he is now in heaven, he appears there for us, as our Advocate, our representative, our forerunner. Whither the head is gone, all the members must in due time follow. I will, he said, in his dying prayer, — Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory. Yes, he wills it, and it shall be done. Soon will your disem-

bodied spirits, freed from all imperfection, follow your ascended Head and Lord, to mansions above, mansions which he is even now preparing for you; and there shall you be forever with the Lord. Comfort and encourage one another then with these words. Place your affections, not on things below, but on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; and live in such a manner that you may be always able to say with an old disciple, My Head is in heaven, my heart is in heaven, and ere long I shall myself be there.

To conclude: Gladly, most gladly, my impenitent hearers, would I say something to render this subject profitable to you; for the subject of the last Sabbath, the never dying worm, and the unquenchable fire, are still before me. I see a vast and most expensive apparatus of means employed to open a way for your escape from that fate. I see heaven opening, your Creator descending, angels attending him down, and all their enraptured hosts exclaiming, Mortals, we bring you glad tidings of great joy; unto you is born a Saviour. I see this Saviour living, teaching, working miracles, dying on the cross; reascending to heaven. I see his heralds sent out to proclaim these facts, to offer peace and pardon and salvation to dying men. I turn with anxious eagerness to you, to see how you are affected by all this; and alas, I find you scarcely affected at all. I find you paying no regard to all these wonders, taking no pains to secure this great salvation; but eager in the pursuit of trifles, and pursuing that very course, which, your future Judge has most explicitly declared, will terminate in everlasting woe. My hearers, do you believe there ever was such a person as Jesus Christ? Do you believe that, standing in the midst of his disciples, he said, I came forth from the Father and am come into the world, and again I leave the world and go to the Father. If you believe this, you must believe that everything which he said, was infallibly true, and will infallibly be accomplished. You must believe that he is now at the right hand of God, that he is speaking to you in his word, and that, if they escaped not who refused to hear him when he spake on earth, much more will you not escape, if you turn away from him speaking from heaven. But why do I ask whether you believe these things? The conduct of many among you declares, with ten thousand voices, that you do not believe them, or that, if you have any

faith in them, it is only that cold speculative faith, which being without works is dead. Did you believe them, nothing on earth, nothing that you ever heard or saw, would appear so interesting, so affecting. Then, instead of seeing you crowding away from the table of Christ, we should see you, with deep interest in your countenances and strong affection in your hearts, coming around it to commemorate a crucified and ascended Saviour. But as it is, we can only say to you, He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

SERMON XCII.

HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein; and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts.—ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21.

You need not be told, my friends, that the prophets and apostles often speak of a glorious day, which is to dawn upon the church in the latter ages of the world. Respecting this glorious day two things are predicted in the chapter before us. In the first place, we are told that the true religion shall then universally prevail. In that day the Lord shall be king over all the earth; and there shall be one Lord and his name one. In the second place, it is predicted that Christians shall make much greater attainments in religion, and that its sanctifying influence shall pervade all the common concerns and employments of life: In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar; yea, every vessel in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them and seethe therein. To show more particularly what these prophetic expressions imply, and what will be the state of the world when they are fulfilled, is my present design.

1. These expressions imply that, when the day here predicted arrives, all the common business, employments and actions of men shall be performed with as much seriousness and devotion to God, as the most pious Christians now feel when engaged in the most solemn duties of religion. Upon the very bells, or as the word sometimes signifies, upon the harness of the horses, and upon all the vessels which are employed for domestic purposes, shall be inscribed holiness to the Lord. In this passage a part is by a common figure of speech put for the whole. A great part of the common business of life is carried on by the help of those domesticated animals which God has appointed to be the servants of man. They are our companions and assistants in almost all our labors. We employ them in cultivating the ground, in carrying home its produce, in the removal of all heavy bodies, in the erection of our habitations, in conveying us from place to place, and for various other purposes which it is needless to particularize; nor do we unfrequently make use of them for purposes of relaxation and amusement. And while the labors of men abroad are principally carried on by the assistance of these animals, the female sex at home are no less occupied with the various utensils which the ingenuity of man has contrived for the convenience of civilized domestic life. By the bells of the horses, therefore, is here meant, all the business of life in which men are engaged abroad; and by the cups or vessels, all the employments which occupy the female sex at home. Upon all these, upon all the daily employments of both sexes shall be inscribed holiness to the Lord.

That we may understand the import of this expression, it is necessary to recollect that, when the Jewish high priest was engaged in the duties of his sacred office, and especially when he went into the Holy of holies to burn incense, he was commanded to wear upon his forehead a mitre with the words, Holiness to the Lord, engraven upon it in letters of gold. By this inscription both the high priest himself, and all who read it, were forcibly reminded, that the God whom he served was a holy God, and that holiness becomes his house, his service, and his worshippers forever. If he ever felt serious and devout, it would be when he wore this inscription upon his forehead. But in the day of which we are speaking, this inscription shall be upon the harness of the horses, and upon the utensils em-

ployed in domestic life; that is, as we have already observed, upon all the daily business, and employments of both sexes. We are not, however, to suppose that the letters which compose these words are actually to be written there. The meaning of this prediction evidently is, that, while persons are engaged in all the common business and concerns of life, whether at home or abroad, whether in the house or by the way, they shall feel as serious, as devout, as much engaged in in the service of God, as did the Jewish high priest, when he wore that sacred inscription upon his forehead. The merchant at his desk, the mechanic in his shop, the mariner in his vessel, the husbandman in his field, the traveller on his journey, and the female at home, shall have such a constant realizing sense of the presence and perfections of God, and such love, confidence, and reverence in exercise towards him, as will lead them to do every thing in a holy manner and with a view to his glory. Every thing will then be sanctified by the word of God and prayer. Religion will then not be confined, as it too often is now, to the closet and the house of God; but she will walk abroad, pervading every place with her blessed influence, and cheering happy man in all his employments with her heavenly smiles and heart-enlivening consolations. Men will then labor as Adam did in paradise, where labor was rest, and employment, and pleasure. Friends and acquaintances will then meet, as Christians now meet, to serve and praise God; every meeting will be a religious meeting; men will then speak of the things of God, as the Jews were commanded to do, in the house and by the way, when they sit down and when they rise up, and conversation on earth will be like the converse of saints and angels in heaven.

Then there will be no idle or profane language, no evil speaking or slander heard; for the law of love will be in the heart, and, of course, the law of kindness will dwell on the lips. Then too, the press, as well as the tongue, will be sanctified. As men will learn war, so the press will tell of war, no more; but periodical publications will then spread abroad the politics, the laws, and the triumphs of the Redeemer's kingdom. Books will no longer contain poison for the soul, or fuel for hateful passions; but be streams flowing from the fountains of life and truth. Then too, all the domestic relations will be sanctified. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters,

masters and servants, will then love one another out of a pure heart fervently, as members of the same body, and fellow heirs of the same heaven. The heart which says to God, our Father in heaven, will of course consider men as brethren upon earth. Man will then never meet an enemy in man, but a friend, and, what is more, a Christian friend. But time forbids us to enlarge. Suffice it to say, that all the common affairs of life will then be performed better than the most sacred religious duties now are. Thus every thing will be turned to gold. Some faint traces of such a state of things, faint however indeed, we find in the better ages of the Jewish commonwealth. For instance, when Boaz visited his reapers in the field, we find him saying to them, The Lord be with you; while they replied to him, The Lord bless thee. Such will be the language universally heard in the day of which we are speaking; and however nauseous and disgusting such expressions may seem, when considered as the cant of formality and hypocrisy, which speaks without feeling, they appear very different, viewed as the real language of the heart. Some such expressions are in common use among ourselves, though the real meaning is unknown, or forgotten, by thousands who adopt them. The term Adieu, for instance, signifies, I commend you to God; and even the common expression, Good bye, is an abbreviation or corruption of the pious wish, God be with you. We mention these instances merely to show how the influence of religion will pervade even the common forms and ceremonies of society, in the day of which we are speaking.

2. In that day, every house, every shop, and the whole world itself, will be a house of God, a temple consecrated to his praise. A temple is a place consecrated and devoted to God for religious purposes. But in that day every house will be such a place; every man will be a priest in his house, to offer up spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, and to teach his children and domestics the right knowledge of God; and every domestic employment will be attended to, with such devotional feelings and exercies as are now felt by pious Christians in the house of God. Wherever smoke ascends to heaven from the habitations of men, there the incense of prayer and praise will ascend with it, as the prayers of the Jews ascended with the smoke of their burnt offerings.

In that day, every building erected for the purpose of labor or merchandise will be such a place; for every man will consecrate his labors and his gains to God, and present himself as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, to be employed in his work. Then every vessel will be such a place, in which those that see God's works in the deep shall praise him for the greatness of his power; in which prayers and thanksgivings will take the place of those oaths and curses by which they are now but too often profaned. Then the whole earth shall be such a place; for it shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the seas; and neither the sun by day, nor the moon and stars by night, when they look down upon the earth, shall behold any thing transacted on its surface which is not done to God's glory, which is not a duty of religion. Then all the race of men will unite with the inanimate creation, in celebrating the high praises of God, making sweet melody in their hearts unto the Lord.

3. Every day will then be like a Sabbath. This day is now separated from the days of labor, for devotional purposes, and the more solemn performance of religious duties. But when every house shall become a temple, when every thing shall be done in a devotional manner, when all our daily actions shall be performed with more love and zeal than our religious duties are now; then, it is evident, every day will be like a Sabbath and much more holy, than our best Sabbaths are now. All our time will then be given to God, and a continual Sabbath on earth will be at once an earnest, and a preparation for an eternal Sabbath in heaven.

4. In that day, every common meal will be what the Lord's supper is now. This is evidently implied in an expression of the prophet in our text. After informing us, that every vessel in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord, he adds, and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein. You need not to be told that, under the Jewish dispensation, all the vessels and utensils employed in sacrificing to God, were solemnly consecrated to this service, and considered as holy; and if any man presumed to use either common fire, or any other vessels, in offering sacrifice to God, he was instantly struck dead for his presumption. But it is foretold that, in the day of which we are speaking, men shall

take the common vessels which are employed for domestic purposes, and use them for sacrifice; and this intimates, that all these vessels shall then be as holy as the vessels of the sanctuary which had been solemnly consecrated to the service of God; or, to use language more suited to the dispensation under which we live, every vessel shall be like the sacramental vessels, and every table like the Lord's table. Now when this shall be the case, when every day shall be like a Sabbath, when every house shall be like a temple, when every man shall be like a minister in his own house, and all the domestic utensils holy, then, of course, every common meal will be like the Lord's supper. Persons will then partake of every refreshment with as much gratitude and love to Christ, and with as feeling a remembrance of his dying love, as the most pious Christians now feel at his table; and when persons invite each other to a feast, it will be like the solemn meeting of a church to commemorate their Saviour's death. In a word, whether men eat, or drink, or whatever they do, they will then do all to the glory of God, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Though every place and every employment will then be holy, and every day like a Sabbath, yet the distinction which now prevails between the house of God and other places, and between the Sabbath and other days, will still be kept up. This is plainly intimated in another part of our text, where we are told, that the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Though all the vessels of the sanctuary were holy, yet some of them were considered as much more so than others. The bowls before the altar, for instance, which were employed to contain the holy incense, or to receive the blood of sacrifices, were considered as more holy than the pots or jars which received the ashes and other substances which were to be carried away, because they were put to a more sacred use. The meaning of this expression, then, evidently is, that those things which are now considered as holy shall, in the day of which we are speaking, be much more so. The Sabbath shall be far more strictly observed; the worship of God performed in a much more solemn manner; the temple of God frequented with far greater seriousness and devotion, than is at present the case; and thus the difference between the house of God and other places, between the Sabbath and other days, and between

the worship of God, and other employments, will still be as great, as it is now. The influence of religion will be felt in every place, and in every employment; but it will still be felt most powerfully, as it is now, at those times and in those places, which are especially set apart for devotional purposes.

Lastly; when this day arrives, there will be no insincere worshippers found in God's house, no hypocritical professors in his church; for our text assures us, that there shall no more be the Canaanite in the house of the Lord. The hypocritical Jews were called Canaanites, because, like those idolators, they worshipped false gods, though they professed to worship none but the true. When therefore it is said, There shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord, the meaning is, that there shall be no formal, insincere worshippers in the house or church of God. Then the whole congregation shall compose the church, and the church shall include none but the real disciples of Christ. Agreeably, we find the prophet Isaiah thus addressing the church by the name of Jerusalem, Rejoice, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for from henceforth there shall no more come into thee, the uncircumcised and the unclean.

Thus, my friends, have I considered the expressions which compose our text, and endeavored to show what they imply. I am aware, that the picture which has been drawn will appear to many of you visionary and exaggerated, and you will say, at once, that it can never be realized. And yet my friends, we have said nothing more than the word of God commands, nothing more than every professor of Christianity is commanded to seek, nothing more than he promises to aim at. We are commanded, and Christians promise, to strive to be holy, as God is holy, to do every thing in word and deed in the name of the Lord Jesus, and whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God. They are commanded to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things; to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long; to pray without ceasing; to set the Lord ever before them; and even servants are expressly required to do whatever they do heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men, knowing that they serve the Lord Christ. And, my friends, the influence of religion naturally leads to all this, and nothing more is necessary to produce just such a state of things as we have described, than a proper degree of faith in

the word of God. If all men had that faith, God and Christ and heaven and hell would, at all times, be realities to their minds; and, of course, affect them as such realities ought to do. Men would then see God every where, in all his works; they would see from what Christ has redeemed them; and of course, their reverence, and gratitude, and love would be always in fervent and living exercise. I believe no person will doubt that, if all men were such Christians as St, Paul was, a great part, if not all that has now been said, would be witnessed among us. And it becomes us to remember that God can give all men as much grace as he gave Paul; and he has said that he will bring all this to pass; and therefore he will. Is any thing too hard for God? Hath he said, and shall he not do it?

Application. 1. From this subject, my Christian friends, we may learn our great and innumerable deficiencies, and how wretchedly we live, in comparison with the manner in which we ought to live. If it is the natural tendency of religion to produce such a state of things as has now been described, then it is evident that the best of us scarcely yet know what religion is. And who of you will say, that this is not the natural tendency of religion? Did not Christ give himself for us, that he might redeem us unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works? Does not the Bible tell us that Christians are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, to show forth his praise? And will you pretend that the motives set before us in the Bible ought not to produce such effects as have now been described? The dying love of Christ, the deliverance from eternal misery, everlasting happiness, not to mention the great increase of happiness such a life would produce in the present world. Surely these motives are sufficient, if we did but feel their force, to lead us to live as has now been described. And will any of you then complain, because we think the church are but little engaged? Will you wonder at us and blame us, because we think it necessary to urge you to be more zealously affected in the pursuit of religion? You may indeed justly blame us for not living more in this manner ourselves, and say, Physician, heal thyself. My friends, permit us, while we confess our innumerable deficiencies publicly to declare unto you, that we intend, by the grace of God, to make at least an effort to come nearer the standard which we have now described. You may do what you

please, but, as for me and for my house, we will endeavor thus to serve the Lord. And who is willing to unite with us in making a similar attempt? Who of you will endeavor to spend every day, as a Sabbath, and perform every act to the glory of God? Remember that we have now great encouragement to do this. A good work, a blessed change has evidently begun. Time was when magazines, newspapers, and works of fiction were, to say the least, far from being religious in their tendency. But now upon many of them Holiness to the Lord is inscribed.

But perhaps some who would willingly engage in this attempt, have been so much discouraged, and led to entertain so many doubts of their state, by what has been said, that they have no courage to attempt any thing. * * * *

2. We may learn from this subject whether we have any religion or not. Should we rejoice in such a state of things as has now been described? If we should, we are Christians, for no unholy heart could be happy in such a world as this would be, did religion thus universally prevail. I doubt not that many in this assembly have felt, while listening to this discourse, that such a state of things, as we have described, would be a most melancholy state to them; they have felt something like gloom overspread their minds at the very thought of it; and not for the world would they see it realized, unless their own feelings should be altered in a corresponding manner. All, therefore, who would heartily rejoice to see religion thus generally prevail; all who feel that such a state of society is just what they would desire to render them happy; all who are wishing and praying for its arrival, are certainly Christians, and have every encouragement to press forward to perfection.

Lastly; from this subject we may learn what pleasures, pursuits, and employments are really lawful and pleasing to God. Every kind of amusement which would prevail, every object of pursuit that would be followed, every kind of employment which would afford a man subsistence in such a state of society as we have described, is lawful and consistent with religion. But if there be any pleasures, pursuits, or employments, which such a universal prevalence of religion would banish from society, it is certain that they are inconsistent with religion, and therefore that they cannot be pleasing in the sight of God. It is also morally certain that every thing, which religion would banish,

directly tends, by its prevalence, to banish, or at least to oppose religion. Let us then be careful to pursue and indulge in nothing, which is inconsistent with the universal spread of Christianity; and while we do this we shall certainly be in the way to heaven, and shall bring down heaven to dwell with us on earth.

SERMON XCIII.

THE GLORY WHICH IS DUE TO JEHOVAH*

Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come before him; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. 1 Chronicles, xvi. 28, 29.

The sacred song, from which these words are selected, was composed by the sweet psalmist of Israel, in honor of the most interesting and joyful event, which occurred during the whole period of his eventful life. The event to which we allude was, the triumphant removal of the ark of God's covenant, the symbol of his presence, from the state of obscurity in which it had remained for many years, to a suitable place in the royal city. To the psalm which David composed on this occasion, no higher or more appropriate praise can be given, than is contained in the remark, that it was in all respects worthy of the occasion which called it forth. He seems to have been inspired, while penning it, with a double portion of that Spirit which dictated all his psalms, and which causes them to resemble the songs that are sung by saints and angels before the throne. Sing unto the Lord, he exclaims, all the earth, show forth his salvation from day to day: Sing unto the Lord, sing to him sacred songs, talk ye

* A Thanksgiving Sermon.

of all his wondrous works. Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Remember the marvellous works which he hath done; his wonders and the judgments of his mouth. Declare his glory among the heathen, his marvellous works among all nations; for great is Jehovah and greatly to be praised, he is to be feared above all gods; for all the gods of the people are vanity and a lie, but Jehovah made the heavens. Glory and honor are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place. Then follow the words of our text. Give unto Jehovah, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto Jehovah glory and strength; give unto him the glory due unto his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship Jehovah in the beauty of holiness.

The duties which all the kindreds of the people, or, in other words, all nations, are here called upon to perform, are precisely the duties for the public performance of which, this day is set apart, and for which we are now professedly assembled. Of these duties the first mentioned, and that which virtually includes them all, is, to give unto Jehovah the glory which is due unto his name. He who rightly performs this duty will perform, not only the appropriate duties of a day of public thanksgiving, but every other duty which God requires of his creatures; for the whole preceptive part of the Bible is contained in this one command, Give unto Jehovah the glory which is his due. To shew what it is to do this, is my present design.

With this view I remark, that every being has a right, and may justly claim, to be regarded and treated, by all who know him, in a manner suited to the nature and character which he possesses, to the relations and offices which he sustains, and to the works which he performs. For instance, human nature, or the nature of man, is of a higher order than that of the brutes. All who possess this nature have, therefore, a right to be regarded and treated in a corresponding manner. Should we in any instance, disregard this right, and treat a man as if he were a brute, we should be guilty of injustice, we should not give him that which is his due. Similar remarks may be made respecting character. If any being possesses a lovely character he has a right to be beloved; if a venerable character, he has a right to be revered; if he is faithful and true, he has a just claim to our belief and confidence. There are also offices and

relations, which give those who sustain them a right to claim particular services and affections from others. A man who sustains the relation of a father, has a right to the filial affections of his children. A man who sustains the office of a sovereign, has a right to the obedience of his subjects. Finally, there are various works which entitle those who perform them to be regarded with suitable affections. One who performs any admirable work has a claim upon our admiration. And the man who performs an act of kindness, has a right to expect grateful returns.

To apply these remarks to the case before us. Jehovah possesses a nature and character peculiar to himself; he sustains various offices and relations, and he has performed many works which he alone could perform. On all these accounts something is due to him from his creatures. And when we regard him with such affections, and yield him such services, as his nature, character, offices, and works deserve, then we give unto him the glory which is due to his name.

1. Let us inquire what is due to Jehovah on account of his nature. The nature of any being is that, the possession of which constitutes him what he is. Thus the possession of human nature constitutes a man. The possession of angelic nature constitutes an angel, and the possession of a divine nature constitutes God. Now the nature of Jehovah is divine. In what it consists, or what is its essence, we cannot indeed tell. We only know some of its properties. We know that it is uncreated, self-existent, independent, and eternal. It could have no beginning; for there is no cause which could bring a divine nature into existence. It can have no end; for there is no cause which can put a period to the existence of divinity. And as Jehovah possesses a divine nature, so he alone possesses such a nature. He is not only God, but God alone. There is no God before him, none beside him. In a word, he is the only being of the same kind who now exists, who ever has existed, or who ever will exist. In this respect he differs widely from all other beings. Of those who possess human nature, and angelic nature, the number is great. Of course, whatever is due to human or angelic nature must be divided among a great number of individuals. Whatever is due to angelic nature must be divided among all the angels. But with respect to Jehovah the case

is different. He has no partners in the divine nature. Of course, there are none to share with him in what is due to that nature. All that is due to divinity is due to him alone, without division. Here then is a being who deserves something which is due to no other being in the universe, who may justly claim to be regarded with affections to which no other being has any title. He therefore who does not give something to Jehovah, which he gives to no other being, does not give unto him the glory which is his due. If it be asked, what must be given to Jehovah, which is given to no other being? I answer, one thing, which must be given to him alone, is, religious worship and adoration. Many other things indeed are his due, which we shall have occasion to notice; but this is due to him, considered simply as a being who is by nature God over all. And the religious worship which is paid him must be suited to his nature. He is by nature a spirit, and must therefore, as our Saviour informs, be worshipped in spirit and in truth. He is also a most holy Spirit, and must therefore, to use the language of our text, be worshipped in the beauty of holiness, in the exercise of all those holy affections which constitute moral beauty and excellence. The man who thus worships Jehovah, the man whose body, soul, and spirit, all bow down before him in humble prostration, whose understanding acknowledges that he is God alone, and whose heart adores him as God alone, gives unto him the glory which is his due on account of his nature.

2. Let us next inquire what is due to Jehovah on account of the character which he possesses. We have already seen, that every being may justly claim to be regarded with affections, suited to his character. Now the character of Jehovah is absolutely perfect. It is the very standard of perfection. We may safely challenge the whole created universe to mention or conceive of, a single beautiful, amiable, admirable, or venerable quality, which he does not possess in an infinite degree. Indeed it is certain that no language has even a name for any excellent, moral or intellectual quality, which is not found in the character of Jehovah. And it is worthy of remark, that there is, in his character, something which is suited to excite every proper affection of which the human soul is capable. Are we, for instance, capable of feeling veneration and awe? There is some-

thing in God's character which is suited to excite these emotions. Are we capable of feeling admiration? There is in his character every thing to admire. Are we capable of love? In his character there is sufficient to raise the flame of love to the highest pitch of intensity. Are we capable of exercising confidence? His truth and faithfulness may well lead us to confide in him. Are we capable of hope? His mercy is well suited to excite it. And can it be necessary to remark that, if any being can deserve praise, he who possesses such a character as this deserves it. Is it not most evident that he is worthy to be feared, and venerated, and admired, and loved, and confided in, with all the heart and soul and mind and strength? Now to regard him with all these affections, and to express these affections in fervent humble praise, extolling him as infinitely great and powerful and wise and good and merciful and true, is to give him the glory which is due to his character. Of him who thus offers praise, God says, He glorifieth me.

3. Let us inquire what is due to God on account of the relations and offices which he sustains. The first and principal relation which he sustains with respect to us, is, that of a Creator to his creatures. And what relation can be more sacred, or invest him who sustains it with so many rights as this? What is not due from us to him who is at once the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits? That you may be prepared to answer this question, suppose yourselves standing by the throne of God, with your eyes fixed on empty space. You are told, that in that space, God is about to exert his power. He speaks,—and suddenly a shapeless mass of dead, inorganized matter appears, where before there was nothing. He speaks again, and this shapeless mass assumes the form and countenance of a human body, with all its limbs and organs of sensation. He speaks once more, and an immortal spirit, endued with rational faculties, comes into existence within that body, and the newly created being awakens to conscious existence, and begins to exert its limbs and faculties. Suppose God should then reveal himself to this being, and say, I am thy Creator. I called into existence that matter which now forms thy body; I gave it its form, its members, its senses, and I breathed into it that living, conscious, intelligent spirit, by which it is actuated and controlled. In these circumstances what should be the feel-

ings and conduct of such a creature? What return would God have a right to expect from him? What return would you expect him to make? Would you not expect to see him fall at his Maker's feet, and to hear him say, Lord I am thine, wholly and forever thine; all that I am, all that I can ever acquire, is thine. To thee I consecrate my existence, my body, my soul, with all the powers of both. To thee alone it belongs to prescribe the manner in which I shall employ them, the thoughts and feelings which I shall exercise, the words which I shall utter, and the services which I shall perform. Speak Lord, and appoint me my duty, for thy servant heareth, and is ready to obey? Language like this, and feeling corresponding with this language, you would surely expect from such a creature, in such circumstances. And should he, instead of realizing these expectations, pay no regard to his Maker, deny that he had any right to his affections and services, and live only to please himself, you would feel that he was very far indeed from rendering unto God that which was his due, that he was ungrateful and criminal in the highest degree. My hearers, what you would expect from such a creature, God expects and demands from each of us. And he has a perfect right to demand it, nor can we give him the glory which is due to him as our Creator, unless we cordially comply with this demand to its utmost extent.

Another relation, which God sustains with respect to us, is that of a Preserver. It is now almost universally acknowledged by philosophers, as well as by divines, that preservation is equivalent to a continually repeated act of creation, and that to keep any being or thing in existence, requires a constant exertion of the same power, which first gave it existence. Hence it follows, that God does in effect repeat the act of our creation, and renew the gift of existence every moment. Every moment then our obligations to his goodness increase. They are greater to-day than they were yesterday; and they will be greater to-morrow, than they are to-day. No man who forgets, or who is not suitably affected by these truths, can be justly considered as giving unto God the glory which is due to his name. From the relations of Creator and Preserver in which Jehovah stands to his creatures, it results, that he must sustain with respect to them, various offices, important and honorable. He must necessarily be the universal Teacher, Master, Sovereign and Judge.

Now we consider each of these offices as honorable, even when possessed by men only, and as entitling those who fill it to peculiar regards. What then is due to Jehovah, who sustains them all with respect to the whole intelligent universe? and who is perfectly qualified to perform the duties of them all in the most perfect manner? Considered as an infinitely wise, omniscient, and infallible Teacher, he may justly claim, that all his instructions should be received with the utmost docility and the most profound submission. Considered as a Master, every service is due to him which he may choose to require of us. Considered as the rightful Lawgiver, Sovereign and Judge of the universe, he has a perfect right to demand unlimited submission to his authority, and obedience to all his commands. If then we would give him the glory which is due to his name, we must acknowledge that he fills all these offices, and must regard and treat him in a corresponding manner.

Lastly; let us inquire what is due to Jehovah on account of the works which he has performed. It has been already remarked, and will be readily allowed, that every being is entitled to all the praise, which his works deserve. The historian, the poet, the orator, the painter, the sculptor, the architect, are all admired, applauded, and honored, in proportion to the real, or supposed excellence of the works which they produce. This admiration, applause and honor, are universally considered as their due, and while the debt is readily acknowledged, it is paid with cheerfulness, and often with rapturous enthusiasm. Thousands of volumes have been written, and ten thousand times ten thousand tongues have been eloquent, in praise of the natural and acquired abilities, which some of the works of men have displayed; nor is it pretended that the authors of these works have received more praise and honor than was their due. O then, what praise, what honors, are due to him, of whom it may with such truth be said, Among the gods, O Lord, there is none like thee, neither are there any works like unto thy works! As all the nations of the earth are less than vanity, in comparison with Jehovah, so all the works of men appear to be less than nothing and vanity, when compared with his. There is one class of his works indeed, toward the performance, or even toward the imitation of which, no man, nor angel, can make the smallest approach. You will perceive at once that I refer

to his works of creation. Men may modify and combine and alter what is already created, but they can create nothing, not even a particle of dust; nay they cannot even originate a single new idea. If any doubt the truth of this assertion, let them try to form an idea of a sixth sense, or of any objects with which such a sense would make us acquainted, and they will soon find that the attempt is vain. How wonderful, how inconceivable, then, must be the powers and operations of that eternal, infinite, all-creating mind, which, before any worlds and creatures existed, could form an idea of all the worlds and creatures which now exist, of all their various parts, and of all the numberless relations and connections which subsist between them! What infinite wisdom and knowledge were displayed, in originating all these ideas, in causing them to stand as it were before the eye of his mind, in forming the whole complicated plan of such a universe as this! And when this plan was formed, what infinite power was required to execute it, to bring out of nothing into existence so many millions of systems and suns and worlds and creatures as now exist! Consider, too, the variety which marks and adorns God's works of creation. Among all the countless objects which God has formed, probably no two can be found which, in all respects, perfectly resemble each other. While all the individuals of each particular species have a general resemblance, no two men, no two animals, no two plants, nay, no two leaves, are exactly alike. Yet who would have thought such a diversity possible, had he not witnessed it? who would have thought it possible that the few features which compose the human countenance could be so infinitely diversified, that no two individuals of the human race should perfectly resemble each other? That each individual should differ from all others in the tones of his voice, is perhaps still more wonderful. So far as we can discern, a similar difference exists between the minds of different individuals. As no two bodies, so probably no two souls are exactly alike. Parents who have numerous families, and instructors who have many youth under their care, often notice this diversity with surprise. My hearers, reflect a moment upon these facts. Recollect that God has been constantly employed, for more than five thousand years, in forming new men, animals, and plants; and yet, so far as we can discover, has never formed any two which are

exactly alike. What an idea does this fact alone give us of the inexhaustible riches of the divine mind! And could we pass from this world to all the worlds which God has made, we should probably find every where new proofs of this truth, every where find new varieties of being, new forms of material and intellectual existence.

From the consideration of God's works of creation, let us proceed to his works of providence, or those works which he performs in preserving, guiding, and governing the universe which he has made. His works of this nature also display infinitely greater wisdom, skill, power, and goodness than all the works of men. We admire the ability displayed by a commander, who regulates, without confusion, all the motions of a numerous army; by a monarch, who skilfully manages all the concerns of an extensive and populous empire. But what is this, compared with the wisdom, knowledge, and power, which are exhibited by Jehovah in the preservation, control, and government, of all his innumerable hosts, and his almost boundless empire! He must every moment see every thing which takes place in the universe; every feeling, thought, word, and action of each of his creatures, and every motion of each particle of matter. He must not only see all these things, but he must never forget them. He must not only see and remember them, but direct and overrule them all, in such a manner, as shall cause them to work together for the accomplishment of his own purposes, and for the good of those who love him. He must also foresee, and be able to foretell, every thing which will take place, with the time and the manner in which it will occur. In fine, he must be continually working in every place; and the past, and the future, heaven, earth, and hell, all time, and all space, with all which they contain, must be constantly present to his view. And O, what a mind must that be, which, without effort, and without confusion, can attend at once to such an infinite variety of objects and events, and direct and control them all in the wisest and best possible manner!

Equally wonderful is the display of moral excellences which God's works of providence exhibit. We admire the bounty of a man who feeds a hundred poor families from his table. But God every day feeds the whole family of man, together with all the inferior animals, besides bestowing on them numberless

additional blessings. We admire the magnanimity and generosity of an earthly monarch, who forgives rebels and traitors, when they lie at his mercy. But God has forgiven millions of the worst of rebels, adopted them as his children, and made them his heirs. We extol the condescension of a sovereign, who, on one day in the week, orders his palace gates to be thrown open for the admission of petitioners. But the ear of the King of kings is every moment open to the petitions of the meanest slave who crawls upon his footstool. We justly admire and venerate St. Paul, who was the instrument of converting and saving some thousands of immortal souls. But God, as the sole efficient agent, has converted and saved many millions of our race, and is still daily converting and saving more.

There is another point of view in which the superiority of the works of God to those of men appears, if possible, still more evident. He is the real author of all the admirable and excellent works which men perfom. He gave them all the abilities by which these works are performed, prompted them to attempt the performance, and then crowned their attempts with success. All the writers, who have enlightened the world, were but as a pen guided by him. All the great men, who have delivered their countrymen from oppression, were but a sword in his hand to cut off oppressors. All the inventors and improvers of useful arts, were indebted to him for all their inventions and improvements. And all the good men, who have blessed the world by their example, and their exertions, owed all their goodness, and all their success to him. He is also the author, the dispenser of all the happiness which has ever been enjoyed on earth or in heaven. He gave us senses capable of being gratified, and provided for them their appropriate gratifications. He gave us our intellectual faculties, and placed before them objects in the contemplation and acquisition of which they might find pleasure. He made us capable of affections which it is delightful to exercise, and gave us relations and friends towards whom those affections may flow out. And all religious enjoyments, all the happiness of heaven proceeds directly from him.

In fine, he is constantly doing good, doing it on the largest scale, doing it not merely to individuals, families and nations, but to whole worlds and systems at once.

Now, if we would give God the glory which is due to him on

account of his works, we must acknowledge that he performs all the works which have been mentioned, and, with suitable admiration, and affection, render unto him the praises and thanksgivings which such works deserve. But what creature, or what combination of creatures, can give him all the praise and thanksgiving which such works deserve? If we praise the sculptor, who merely forms the image of a man, how can we sufficiently praise him who created not only the sculptor himself, but ten thousand thousand other forms, glowing with life, and radiant in beauty! If we admire the painter who skilfully delineates a landscape, or a human countenance, what admiration is due to the divine Artist, who spreads out his canvass over the whole earth, and, with colors dyed in heaven, makes it all one grand landscape, in which all that is beautiful, and all that is sublime, are exhibited in contrast, or harmoniously blended! If we extol the historian, the poet, the orator, the philosopher, how can we sufficiently extol him who created and gave them all their powers. If we admire the astronomer who discovers the motions of the heavenly bodies, how shall we sufficiently admire him who lighted up the firmament with suns and planets, and guides Arcturus with his sons. If we applaud the man who preserves the life of a single fellow creature, what applauses are due to that God who daily preserves all creatures and all worlds in being. If no praises are thought too great for the patriot, who delivers his country from temporal bondage, what praises are sufficient for him who offers to a ruined and enslaved world, deliverance from sin and misery, and death and hell? O, never, never, can any creature, nor all creatures combined, give God the whole glory which his works deserve; not though they should spend an eternity in praising him. All they can do is, to give him all that they have, to acknowledge that he alone is worthy to be praised, that all glory and honor are his due, and to combine all their powers, and all their affections and exertions in forming one refulgent unequalled crown, not to be placed on his head, for it would be unworthy, but to be cast at his feet. When all creatures shall unite in doing this, when they shall all fear, and admire, and love, and serve, and obey, and thank, and praise, Jehovah, with their whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, then, and not till then, will they obey the command which calls upon them, to give him the glory

which is due to his name. This is done in heaven. There every heart is filled to overflowing with all holy affections; every tongue is loud in his praise; every crown is cast at his feet; saints, angels, and archangels are all prostrate before him. And thus it ought to be on earth. Thus it would be, were not men alienated from God by sin, and blind to the glories of his nature, his character, and his works. We have not exhibited, nor even mentioned, the ten thousandth part of his glories, nor of his just claims to receive glory from his intelligent creatures. But we must leave the subject, all imperfect and unfinished as it is, and conclude with a few inferences and reflections.

1. Does God require nothing more of his creatures than the glory which is due to him on account of his nature, character, offices, and works? O, then, how reasonable, how just, are his requisitions. He merely requires the payment of a just debt, a debt far more justly due, than any debt which was ever paid by man to man, by children to their parents, by subjects to their prince. How unreasonable then, is it to complain of his requisitions! How ungrateful, cruel, and unjust to refuse to comply with them! How inconceivable the guilt which men thus incur!

2. Is all the glory which has been mentioned due unto God's name, and ought it, in strict justice, to have been ascribed unto him by men, ever since man began to exist? How immeasurably great then is the debt which our world has contracted, and under the burden of which it now groans! During every day and every hour, which has elapsed since the apostacy of man, this debt has been increasing; for every day and every hour all men ought to have given unto Jehovah the glory which is due to his name. But no man has ever done this fully. And a vast proportion of our race have never done it at all. Now the difference between the tribute which men ought to have paid to God, and that which they actually have paid, constitutes the debt of which we are speaking. How vast then, how incalculable is this debt! For more than five thousand years every individual of the human race has been adding to it. Can we then wonder if its constantly increasing weight should finally sink our world down to hell?

There is another point of view in which our contemplation of the debt may assist us to compute its magnitude, or rather

convince us that it is, beyond computation, great. Compare the blessings which have descended from heaven to earth, with the returns which have ascended from earth to heaven. The difference between them composes the debt under consideration. And O, how immeasurable is this difference! That you may be convinced it is so, look first at the blessings which God has sent from heaven to earth. As soon as the world was created, see the windows of heaven opened above it, and all the fulness of the Godhead gushing forth, and pouring down upon it in a torrent, a flood of blessings, rich, various, inestimable blessings. Without cessation or diminution this flood has ever since continued to flow, as if all heaven were to be poured out upon earth, while, in its descent, the deluge divides into as many streams as there are individuals in our world; a constant stream falls upon each. My hearers, were God's blessings waters, they would long ere this have risen more than fifteen cubits above the summits of the highest mountains. Now look at the returns which men have made for all this deluge of blessings. From a comparatively small number of families and individuals scattered here and there, see a few clouds of incense, a few imperfect offerings, praises and thanksgivings slowly ascending to heaven. And is this all? Yes, my hearers, this is all, all the returns which men have made to God for blessings without number and without measure; and for the unspeakable gift of his Son. Need any thing more be said to show, that the debt which our world owes to God is great beyond all finite calculation? In this debt every nation participates. In this debt our own country largely shares. Of this debt every individual present owes a part. So far as the blessings you have received exceed the returns which you have made; so far as each of you has failed to glorify God to the utmost extent of his powers, so far you are indebted to him. Well then may each of us be represented as owing God a debt of ten thousand talents. And is not this debt sufficiently large? Will any one present proceed to increase it by still neglecting to give God the glory which is due to his name? Will any one still refuse or neglect to apply to that Saviour, through whom alone the remission of his mighty debt can be obtained? Rather let all, without delay, apply to him for this purpose, and then proceed to present their bodies and their souls as living sacrifices to God, continually offering

those praises, thanksgivings, and spiritual services, which are acceptable through Jesus Christ.

Finally; is all this glory due unto God's name? Then there is no reason to fear that saints and angels in heaven will not ave sufficient employment to occupy them through eternity. What God is he will be unchangeably and eternally. What God does shall be forever. He will therefore forever continue to deserve all the glory which he now deserves; and to ascribe unto him this glory in ceaseless praises and thanksgivings, will constitute the employment, and the felicity of saints and angels through endless ages. Nor will this employment ever become wearisome. New glories and new works of wonder will still burst upon their astonished sight, and excite in their bosoms new emotions of wonder, admiration, gratitude and love; and these emotions it would pain them not to express in new songs of thanksgiving and praise. Christian, is this to be thine eternal employment and felicity? Is thine ear destined to hear, and thy tongue to join in the songs of heaven? Is thine eternity to be one long endless day of thanksgiving? If so, abound more and more in this blessed work; be jealous for the honor of the Lord your God, and with increasing diligence and fervor and constancy, give unto him the glory which is due to his name.

SERMON XCIV.

GOD'S PRAISES SUNG; HIS WORKS FORGOTTEN.

They sang his praise; they soon forgat his works. — Psalm cvi. 12, 13.

This was said of that generation of the Israelites, which came out of Egypt. The chapter which contains the portion of their history here alluded to, begins with rapturous expressions of gratitude, and ends with the murmurs of discontent; both uttered by the same lips, within the short space of three days. Their expressions of gratitude were called forth by that wonderful display of the divine perfections, which delivered them from the host of Pharaoh, and destroyed their enemies. Their murmurs were excited by a comparatively trifling inconvenience, which in a few hours was removed. Of persons, whose thanksgivings were so quickly, and so easily changed to murmurings, it might well be said; — though they sang God's praises, they soon forgat his works.

Unhappily, the Israelites are by no means the only persons, of whom this may, with truth, be said. Their conduct, as here described, affords a striking exemplification of that spurious gratitude, which often bursts forth in a sudden flash, when dreaded evils are averted, or unexpected favors bestowed; but expires with the occasion that gave it birth; a gratitude resembling the joy excited in an infant's breast by the gift of some glittering toy, which is received with rapture, and pleases for an

hour; but when the charm of novelty vanishes, is thrown aside with indifference; and the hand that bestowed it is forgotten. Springing from no higher principle than gratified self love, it is neither acceptable to God, nor productive of obedience to his laws; nor does it in any respect really resemble that holy, heaven-born affection, whose language it often borrows, and whose name it assumes. It may be called, distinctively, the gratitude of sinners; who, as they love those that love them, will of course be grateful to those that are kind to them; grateful even to God when they view him as kind. When excited by any signal display of his goodness, wisdom, and power, it is often, as in the case before us, accompanied by other emotions of the same character; by wonder, admiration, joy, and love, which assist to swell the song of praise, but die on the lips that pour it forth. Such is the gratitude, such the emotions with which man too often receives the blessings, and contemplates the works of his Creator. Such evidently was the gratitude of the Israelites; and such, I fear must be added, is much of the gratitude, which, as a community, and as individuals, we have expressed on our annual seasons of public thanksgiving.

A person unacquainted with human nature, who should witness for the first time some striking exhibition of national gratitude, would not, indeed, suspect this to be its character. Such a person, while listening to the rapturous ascriptions of praise poured forth by the Israelites on the shore of the Red Sea, would have little expected to hear them, within three days, impiously murmuring against that God, whose goodness they had so recently experienced, and so loudly acknowledged. And as little, perhaps, would such a person be prepared to anticipate the scenes, which usually attend, and follow our days of public thanksgiving. The day itself, in its approach and commencement, would present to his mind an appearance, in no small degree imposing, affecting, and even morally sublime. When he read the proclamation of our chief magistrate, enumerating the many public and private blessings for which we are indebted to the unmerited bounty of God; and calling upon men of all classes and denominations, to set apart a season, for the express purpose of thankfully, and publicly acknowledging his goodness; — when he saw the appointed day on its arrival ushered in with the solemn stillness of the Sabbath; and the usually

thronged places of business empty; when he beheld the crowd, which, professedly, enter God's gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise; when his "mind's eye," glancing rapidly over the State, saw its temples filled, and its inhabitants every where engaged in a public act of praise; when he listened to the sacred songs which burst from every consecrated edifice, expressing nothing but thankfulness, and admiration, and joy; —would he not exclaim,—surely this is a grateful people! Here, if no where else, the exhortation of the Psalmist is literally complied with. Here, rulers and subjects; legislators and judges; young men and maidens; old men and children; all unite to praise the name of the Lord. Here, at least, his showers of blessing do not descend upon a barren soil; but his goodness is suitably felt, acknowledged, and returned. It leads men to look with an eye of penitence upon the past. It will constrain them to cheerful and constant obedience in future. The public sacrifice of thanksgiving in the sanctuary will be succeeded by more private, but not less acceptable offerings, from each family altar; from every house praise will be heard, and incense ascend; and the tide of gratitude, which has flowed deep, and full, and strong, in the temples of God, will now, divided into many streams, glide silent and unseen through every heart; refreshing the roots of each moral and Christian virtue; and clothing with new verdure the face of society.

Such would, probably, be the expectations of a person unacquainted with human nature, on witnessing, for the first time, the solemnities of a public thanksgiving. How greatly then would he be disappointed and surprised, to find none of his expectations realized; to see thousands going from the house of God to indulge in gluttony and excess; rising from a still loaded table without even the form of an acknowledgement to Him, on whose bounty they had feasted; and closing a day consecrated to holy gratitude, in sensual pleasure, and sinful mirth? How greatly would he be surprised on the following day to find, that every appearance of thankfulness, and even of regard to our Benefactor had vanished;—to hear the language of impatience, discontent, and perhaps of profaneness, from lips which had just been employed in uttering the high praises of God; and to see the tide of national depravity, after a momentary ebb, flowing again in all its accustomed channels, with all its former strength!

Would he not exclaim;—might he not with truth exclaim; This people sing God's praise; but they soon forget his works?

But without, at present, farther insisting on our national inconsistency, ingratitude, and forgetfulness of God; evils, which though we may lament, we cannot remove; I shall proceed to mention some instances, in which the works and perfections of Jehovah engage our attention; excite our natural affections; and, perhaps, call forth expressions of praise; but produce no salutary effects upon our temper or conduct; and are soon forgotten.

Of these instances the first, which I shall notice, is furnished by the works of creation; or, as they are often, though not very properly called, the works of nature. In so impressive a manner do these works present themselves to our senses; so much of variety, and beauty, and sublimity do they exhibit; such power, and wisdom, and goodness do they display; that perhaps no man, certainly no man who possesses the smallest share of sensibility, taste, or mental cultivation, can, at all times, view them without emotion; without feelings of awe, or wonder, or admiration, or delight. While contemplating the moon walking in her brightness, or the sun shining in his strength; the heavens, the work of God's fingers, or the bed of ocean hollowed by his hand; the wonders of greatness and distance brought near by the telescope, or the no less astonishing wonders of littleness revealed by the microscope; who has not felt emotions allied, apparently at least, to religion; has not felt almost persuaded to become religious; has not felt constrained to exclaim,—Marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; in wisdom hast thou made them all! Who has seen the face of heaven gather blackness; the clouds rising and rolling on in mountain over mountain, the lightning's flash, quickly and more quickly repeated, illuminating them with a sudden glare; the storm sweeping the land, and rousing ocean to fury; while the barriers placed by omnipotence repel its rage, and say,—Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther; without feeling, that God is, fearful in praises, and terrible out of his holy places; that, He hath his way in the whirlwind and the storm; and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

And in the morning of the day; in the spring of the year; when God seems to repeat his work of creation, and, in the

language of the Psalmist, renews the face of the earth; when his unseen, but swiftly moving pencil repairs the ravages of winter; restores to faded nature the colors, the bloom, the freshness of youth; and adorns with unrivalled tints the forest and the field; — when all is mildness and serenity; when the whole landscape smiles, and happy warblers give it a thousand tongues; making every grove resound with the expressions of their joy; who has not felt his breast swell with emotions which resembled, and which he, perhaps, fondly called, love and gratitude to the Creator, admiration of his works, and delight in his perfections? But alas, how transient, how unproductive of salutary effects, have all these emotions proved? Appetite and passion, though hushed for a moment, soon renewed their importunities; the glitter of wealth, and distinction, and power, eclipsed, in our view, the glories of Jehovah; we sunk from that heaven toward which we seemed rising, to plunge afresh into the vortex of earthly pleasures and pursuits; we neglected and disobeyed Him, whom we had been ready to adore; and continued to live without God, in a world which we had just seen to be full of his glory. The rays of that glory, darting upon our minds, enkindled indeed a sudden flame; and the flame thus kindled flashed up toward heaven, but sunk and expired with the flash. Thus we sang God's praise; but soon forgat his works. Our emotions were of precisely the same nature with those, which are excited by some grand display of human powers; and, like them, they produced no reformation of conduct; no amelioration of the heart.

A second instance of a similar nature is afforded by the manner, in which men are often affected by God's works of providence. In these works his perfections are so constantly, and often so clearly displayed; our dependence on them is at all times so real, and sometimes, so apparent; and they bear, in many cases, so directly and evidently upon our dearest temporal interests, that even the most insensible cannot, always, regard them with indifference. Here nations and individuals stand on precisely the same level. Both are equally, that is entirely, dependent on the providence of God; and both are occasionally constrained to feel and acknowledge their dependence. But the feeling is usually transient; and the acknowledgement is forgotten almost as soon as it is made. How often have we

seen Christian nations, when scourged by war, pestilence, or famine; and when the help of man was evidently vain, addressing public and united supplications to heaven for relief. And as often have we seen them, after relief was obtained, singing with apparent thankfulness, *Te Deum laudamus*, — Thee O God we praise; and then proceeding without delay to repeat those sins, the punishment of which had just been removed.

If there is a solitary instance to which this remark does not apply, it is afforded by our fathers; the fathers of New England. How often they were placed in circumstances of distress and danger, from which God alone could deliver them; and how often, in answer to their supplications, he granted them deliverance, you need not be informed. Well may we exclaim, with the posterity of Abraham, — Our fathers trusted in thee, O God; they trusted in thee; and thou didst deliver them. And while they trusted in God for deliverance, they were truly grateful for its accomplishment. They did not forget the mighty works of the Lord, but taught them diligently to their children; and endeavored to have them preserved in everlasting remembrance. Witness their establishment of the custom, in compliance with which we are now assembled for thanksgiving in this house of prayer.

But if our fathers furnish an exception to the remarks, which have been made respecting the ingratitude of nations; it is evident that their descendants do not. Though we have equal reason with them, to be grateful for the kind interpositions of providence in their favor; since to those interpositions we are indebted, for all our civil and religious privileges; yet how entirely, almost, are they forgotten? How seldom is the annual celebration of our independence marked, by any acknowledgement of God's goodness; any direct reference to his providential interposition; any thing which indicates a grateful recollection of his past favors. True, he is, sometimes, on these occasions addressed in prayer; and his praise is perhaps sung; but it is too evident that his works are soon, very soon, forgotten? Do not those days, as they pass in review before Him, to whom we owe our independence, appear stained with more, and fouler pollutions, than, perhaps, any other day of the year? And does not the cry of our national sins, at all times loud, then come up before him, with peculiar urgency? This, my hearers,

is something worse than forgetting God's works. It is selecting the anniversary of that day, on which he gave us one of the greatest temporal blessings which a nation can receive, to be employed in offending him with more than ordinary diligence. It is turning a day, which ought to be observed, if observed at all, as a festival of grateful recollection, into a season of idleness, intemperance, profaneness, and every species of excess.

But once more passing by evils, which no efforts of an individual can remedy, let us turn, for farther illustrations of this subject, to our families, and to ourselves. On reviewing our personal and domestic history we shall all find too many instances, in which, though we may have sung God's praises, we have forgotten his works. Say, ye, who go down to the sea in ships, and behold the wonders of God in the deep; did you never there experience the wonders of his mercy? Have none of you been reduced to extremities which caused you to say, all hope that we should be saved was taken away? And did no conviction of your dependence on him, who holds the winds in his hands, then pervade your minds? Did no wish that he would interpose for your deliverance arise in your breasts; a wish which assumed the form of a prayer; or which would have assumed that form, had not guilty fears, and want of confidence prevented? And when God mercifully granted what you, perhaps, dared not ask, did nothing like an emotion of gratitude; nothing like a half formed resolution to devote your lives to Him, from whom you had twice received them, mingle with the joys of unexpected deliverance? Has that emotion proved lasting? Has that resolution been fulfilled? If not, you must be classed with those, who sing God's praises, but forget his works.

But it is not on the sea alone, that the preserving mercy of God is needed, and experienced. Many of my hearers have been brought, by casualty or disease, to the gates of the grave. Have none of you in that situation looked for help to Him, who dispenses life and death? And when the voice of his providence said respecting you, — Deliver him from going down to the pit, — when you felt health and strength gradually returning to your enfeebled frame; — when, on first leaving the chamber of sickness, you delightedly gazed on the face of nature smiling with new charms, and eagerly inhaled the refreshing, invigorating breeze; — what were your emotions? Did no expressions

of thankfulness to the Great Physician escape from your lips? Did you make no promises that you would serve him more faithfully? And have you not violated those promises? Have you not forgotten his works?

And ye, whose friends were thus unexpectedly restored to you; ye, who have sat, day after day, by the sick bed of a child or relative, in the gloomy post of observation, and seen it grow darker every hour; while you hoped against hope, and felt hope struggle with despair; ye too, who have feared, and had hourly increasing reason to fear, that the perils of the sea had proved fatal to a husband, a father, a son or a brother; who have known the protracted agonies of suspense,—the sickness of heart which hope deferred occasions;—what record of your feelings and conduct in those trying hours has memory preserved? Did you not alternately weep and pray; and pray and weep? Did you not cry in your hearts, if not with your lips, O, if God will hear me but this once;—if he will grant me this one favor; my whole life shall show my gratitude. He did grant it. The child, the friend, whom you had, in imagination, followed to the grave, or seen buried in the deep, was given back to your arms; and in the first transports of joy excited by this scarcely hoped-for gift, the Giver was not forgotten. With grateful admiration you acknowledged his goodness; perhaps returned him public thanks, and called upon others to unite with you in his praises. But soon, though not immediately, you forgot his works. The favor you had received caused you to forget them. The restored object of your affections was before you. You felt happy in his presence. You no longer needed the special interposition of God. You had no particular favor to ask; no pressing sorrow or want to drive you to his mercy-seat; and he was therefore neglected and forgotten.

Nor is it only when children are given to us a second time, and restored to us, as it were, from the dead, that we sing God's praises. Permit me to remind those of you who are parents, of your feelings, when you first became entitled to that appellation;—of your previous anxiety;—of your vows made in secret;—of the tears of joy which fell fast upon the unconscious object of your desire and affection, when first placed in your arms. And did nothing like gratitude mingle with that joy? Did the father feel that he owed nothing to God, for a wife preserved, and a child

bestowed? Did the mother feel unindebted to Him who spared her to enjoy the pleasures, and perform the duties, resulting from that relation? If the debt of gratitude was then felt and acknowledged, has it not long since been forgotten, and its payment indefinitely postponed?

On this part of our subject it would be easy to enlarge. But sufficient has been said to convince all, who are accessible to conviction, that it may justly be said of us, with reference to God's providential dispensations,—they sang his praise; they soon forgot his works.

In a similar manner are men often affected by God's works of grace; or those works whose design and tendency it is, to promote the spiritual and eternal interests of man. These works most clearly display, not only the natural, but the moral perfections of Jehovah. Here his character shines, full-orbed and complete. Here, all the fulness of the Godhead, all the insufferable splendors of Deity, burst at once upon our "aching sight." Here the manifold perfections of Jehovah; holiness and goodness, justice and mercy, truth and grace, majesty and condescension, hatred of sin and compassion for sinners, are harmoniously blended, like the many colored rays of solar light, in one pure blaze of dazzling whiteness. Here, every thing that is suited to arrest the attention, to enlighten and convince the understanding, to seize the imagination, or to melt the heart, is made to bear upon us with an energy which it would seem impossible to resist. That an exhibition of these wonders should make, at least, a temporary impression upon our minds, is no more than might naturally be expected. When the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God are proclaimed in our ears; when the riches of his mercy, the treasures of his grace, the fulnsss of his condescension, compassion, and love, are poured out before us, from a heart which has felt their influence, by 'lips which have been touched as with a live coal from the altar of God;' when, with a pencil dipped in the vivid colors which inspiration affords, he is drawn in the attitude of an affectionate father, grieved at once by the sins, and the miseries of his children; beseeching them in the kindest language of entreaty to return; and giving them a Saviour in the Son of his love; when the beauties, the glories, and the sufferings of that Saviour are portrayed by one who has sat at the foot of the cross, and

seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; when, with a countenance full of invitation, compassion, and love, this divine friend of sinners stands and woos them to himself, assuring all who will come, of a kind reception, and freely offering rewards, such as eye has not seen, nor ear heard;—when these rewards are displayed; when the immortal glories of an opening heaven are made to shine around us; when the echo of its triumphant songs vibrates upon our ears; when kingdoms, crowns and thrones, eternal as their bestower are presented to our view; it is almost impossible, that even our obdurate hearts should be always unaffected, or retain their characteristic insensibility. For a moment they seem to be melted. We feel, and are ready to acknowledge, that God is good; that the Saviour is kind; that his love ought to be returned; that heaven is desirable. Like a class of hearers described by our great teacher, we receive the word with joy; a joy not unmingled with something which resembles gratitude; and we sing, or feel as if we could with pleasure sing, God's praises. But we leave his house; the emotions there excited, subside; like the earth, when partially softened by a wintry sun, our hearts soon regain their icy hardness; the wonders of divine grace are forgotten; and God has reason to say in sorrow and in displeasure,—Your goodness is as the morning cloud; and as the early dew it goeth away.

But some of those whom I address have been more deeply affected by God's work of grace. For this you were prepared by previously passing through a state of religious anxiety. Conscience was roused to perform the long neglected duties of her office; and her reproaches you could neither silence nor endure. Your sins were set in order before your eyes; the curses of God's violated law thundered in your ears; destruction from the Almighty was a terror to you; His arrows, the poison of which drinketh up the spirit, pierced your souls; and despair and death seemed to be your portion. How ardently did you then desire relief; what promises, what protestations, what vows did you make? At length, your desires seemed to be granted. Relief was by some means obtained, and rapture succeeded to despair. A persuasion that God had pardoned you, and that he would make you forever happy, raised your affections to their highest pitch. You felt as if you were in a new world. Then

every thing seemed, in your view, to be praising God; then you thought it pleasant to praise him; and your language was,—I will sing unto the Lord so long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have any being. For a time, this seemed to be the language, not of your lips only, but of your conduct. Gradually, however, though not immediately, you forgot God's works; your gratitude languished and expired; its half ripened fruit withered upon the stalk, and insensibility or discontent have usurped its place. Your history, there is reason to fear, will resemble that of the Israelites; like them you passed the red sea; like them, you triumphantly sang God's praises on its shores; like them, you said,—All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient; like them, professedly following God, you entered the wilderness; but unbelief arrested your progress, as it did theirs; and like them, you will, probably, die in your sins, and never reach the promised land; never, indeed, unless a recollection of your ingratitude and unfaithfulness should lead to repentance.

On some of my hearers, however, God's works of grace have made, I trust, a more lasting impression. Your religion, my brethren, has not withered and died, like that which has no root; but have you not too much cause to apply to yourselves the language of our text? Remember, the kindness of your youth; the love of your espousals; the joys, the grateful joys which attended and followed your conversion. Where are they now? Where is your first love? Remember, too, how often your conversion has, in effect, been repeated; how often you have, in consequence, renewed your vows and thanksgivings; and, in weeping admiration have exclaimed, who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression? Recollect, also, the numberless temporal and spiritual mercies, mercies new every moment, which have at different times excited your gratitude, and which you fondly hoped would render it lasting. But has it proved so? Have not some days, whose morning hours witnessed your expressions of thankfulness, heard from your lips before night, the language of peevishness and discontent? When you have ardently desired the salvation of a child, a relation, a friend; when with supplications and tears you have asked this favor of Him who hears prayer; and he has at length given you reason to believe, that your

request was granted; has your gratitude always corresponded with your obligations? Might it not rather have been said of you, He rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up? But I need not press you farther with these inquiries; for you will readily acknowledge that, however often you may have sung God praises, you have ever been prone to forget his works.

It might now be useful to consider the causes to which it is owing, that our religious emotions so often prove transient; and are so soon succeeded by forgetfulness of God. But this would lead us into a wide field, which time will not allow us, at present, to explore. I shall only observe, that men are willing to offer God praises and thanksgivings, because it is an offering which costs them nothing; and because, while it seems to shield them from the charge of ingratitude, it involves the renunciation of no favorite sin; the performance of no disagreeable duty; the practice of no self-denial. But they are not willing to make those constant returns for God's goodness, which he deserves and requires, because this is, in their estimation, an expensive offering; because it implies sacrifices, which they are not disposed to make, and an attention to duties, which they dislike to perform.

The preceding remarks can scarcely fail to excite many painful reflections in every serious mind which acknowledges their truth. On human nature, they look with a most unfavorable aspect. They show us that while it is constantly and strongly prone to evil, it is, with respect to goodness, unstable as water, which receives and loses impressions with equal facility. They shew us that ingratitude to God ever has been, and that it still is, one of its distinguishing features. The hatefulness of this feature is acknowledged by all. "Call a man ungrateful," says one writer, "and you can call him nothing worse." "Ingratitude," says another, "is a vice so odious that the man was never yet found who would confess himself to be guilty of it." But ungrateful, man must be called, while truth is allowed to speak: of ingratitude, the most base and inexcusable, he must acknowledge himself to be guilty if he would prove that he is not profoundly ignorant of his own character.

Another painful reflection, naturally suggested by the preceding remarks is, that little as there appears to be of religion in

the world, there is much less in reality than in appearance. In men who possess some real goodness, a single grain of gold gilds a large surface of baser materials; while in other men, varnish and tinsel supply the place of the gold. Much of the religion, even of good men, consists of merely animal emotions and natural affections, baptized by a Christian name; and all the religion of other men, if we except external forms, is of the same character. This, there is reason to fear, is the character of our national religion, if we can be said to have any. As a nation, we treat Jehovah very much as heathen nations treat their gods; only with less apparent respect and veneration. We compliment him, as they do their gods, with the name and attributes of Divinity. We publicly implore his aid, as they do that of their idols, when evils oppress, or dangers threaten us. When relief is obtained, we, like them, have public seasons of thanksgiving, and offerings of praise; and our festivals, like theirs, are marked by sensual indulgencies; and followed by no reformation of national sins. What then are we to think of our annual seasons of thanksgiving? In what light, must we suppose they are regarded by Him whose judgment is according to truth? Must he not, in view of every thing by which they are attended and followed, regard them as a mere empty form; as the copy of a heathen festival; or, at best, as only a repetition of the insincere praises of Israel? Must he not regard them as an earthly monarch would regard a book, inscribed to him on the title page, and preceded by a preface filled with flattery; but containing, on every following page, a gross libel on his character and government? Like such a book, this day is dedicated to God. Like such a preface, it is filled with his praise; while every other day of the year, like every other page of the book, speaks a language most offensive to his ear. Mistake me not, however. I would be far from insinuating or entertaining a wish, that this custom, established by our pious fathers, should be discontinued. I only wish that its original character may be restored; that it may become the preface to a whole volume of praise; that the stream of gratitude, which seems to burst forth so copiously on this day, may continue to flow, though more silently, through the year. Especially do I wish that the gratitude of this state may thus flow perennially; that her annual festivals of thanksgiving may

resemble, in their character and consequences, those of our fathers. This festival she now, for the first time, observes, as an Independent State. Her voice now, for the first time, joins in sacred chorus with the voices of her sister states, and helps to swell the annual song of praise. And is it not highly desirable, —must it not appear so to every one who prays for her peace and prosperity, that now, when her voice is first heard in heaven; it should utter nothing but the sincere language of truth, and unaffected devotion; that now, when the incense of her united praises first ascends in a separate cloud before the throne of the Eternal, the flame on her altars should not be kindled with unhallowed fire? Shall we, on this most interesting occasion, give Him, whom we worship, reason to say of us;—This people lie unto me with their mouths, and flatter me with their tongues; for their hearts are not right with me, neither are they steadfast in my covenant? God, in mercy, forbid! God in mercy forgive those, if such there are, who constrain him to say this of them; who pollute, with heartless praises, the first public thankoffering of this State! Of pardoning mercy, in its fullest extent, all who on this, or indeed on any other occasion, offer such praises to God, will stand in no common need. To utter the praises of Jehovah, to offer Him thanks, is, my brethren, however lightly we may now think of it, a most solemn and important act; an act which will be followed by consequences awfully interesting. By uttering his praises we acknowledge that he deserves them, that he is supremely worthy of all those affections, of which praise is the language, the proper expression. By giving him thanks, we acknowledge that he has been kind to us; and that we are under obligations to regard and treat him as our benefactor. Should we then refuse or neglect to place our affections on him; should our future conduct be inconsistent with our praises and thanksgivings, they will rise in judgment against us at the day of retribution. They will prove that we are acquainted with the character and works of God; that we had experienced and known his loving kindness; that we had been made sensible of our duties and obligations. It will thus be made to appear evident, that we refused to love and serve a Being whose glories shone around us so brightly,—whose favors descended upon us so profusely that we could neither avoid perceiving, nor refrain from acknowl-

edging them. Of course, no plea of ignorance can be urged in our behalf. We shall be left without excuse. We shall be condemned out of our own mouths.

If we would avoid this fate, our future conduct must correspond with our present services; our gratitude must be practical, and our praises unceasing. And ought they not to be so? If the perfections and works of God ever deserve our praises, do they not always deserve them? Is he not, yesterday, to-day, and forever, the same? If his favors deserve any return, do they not deserve a constant return? Are they not new every morning; and can we hope to discharge, in one day, a debt which we have, during the whole year, been contracting, and which hourly increases?

Should the thankfulness, which our fellow-citizens this day express, prove to be of the spurious, transient kind described above, they will be peculiarly inexcusable; for the dispensations of providence, as they respect our political interests, are admirably suited to excite, not a momentary burst, but a continual flow of grateful affection. God's mercies have descended upon us, not in a sudden torrent, but in a gentle and constant shower. If we have not, like some other nations, been recently freed from the pressure of overwhelming evils, it is because that from all such evils, we have, for many years, been graciously preserved. But this circumstance rather increases than diminishes our obligations to the great Disposer of events. The mariner who finds the sea tempestuous; who is often in imminent danger of shipwreck; and who, after despairing of life, is brought in safety to the desired haven, may feel, and ought to feel, strong emotions of thankfulness. But has he more real cause for gratitude, than one whose voyage is uninterruptedly pleasant and prosperous; and who experiences no striking interpositions of providence in his favor, because none were necessary? Such, in a degree unexampled in this age of storms and convulsions, has been our political voyage; a circumstance which surely calls for gratitude, as uninterrupted as our prosperity. Permit me to add that whatever difference of opinion may have existed, respecting the expediency of our separation from the parent state; no one will deny, that, since this event has taken place, we are under great obligations to Him, whose watchful care prevented the evils which might have ensued; and rendered the dreaded shock of separation so gentle, that it was scarcely felt.

In fine, who have cause for continual thankfulness, if we have not? From what nation of the earth may God justly expect a constant tribute of gratitude or praise, if not from this. Go through the world, my hearers; visit every nation; compare its situation with our own; and on your return you will be constrained to cry:—He hath not dealt so with any people; Surely the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage. Go, and urge other nations to praise God; and, if they know what you enjoy, they will reply;—"Give us your lot, and our praises shall be unceasing." Shall our expressions of gratitude cease then, with this day; cease even before its close; cease as soon as we leave the sanctuary? Shall all God's wondrous works be so soon forgotten, and this, like our former days of thanksgiving, only close one year of sin, and begin another? Shall we write our history, or constrain God to write it, in the words of our text; and make the character of the perverse, ungrateful Israelites, who justly perished in their sins, forever our own? Rather let this day witness your assumption of another, an opposite character. Rather let the thanksgivings of this day never end, till they are swallowed up in the praises of eternity. Not only now say, but through life continue to say;—Unto thee, O Lord, do we give thanks. Unto thee do we give thanks; for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare.

NOTE. This Sermon was preached at the Annual Thanksgiving in 1820, —the year, in which was consummated the separation of Maine from Massachusetts.

SERMON XCV.

THE CONDITION OF MEN WITHOUT THE BIBLE, OR WITH THE BIBLE PROVED TO BE FALSE.

If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also, which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.—1 Corinthians xv. 16—18.

It is often pretended, by those who receive not the truth as it is in Jesus, that all the religious errors and mistakes, which prevail among Christian nations, are occasioned by the want of some infallible living teacher, to whom men might apply for instruction, in all doubtful cases; and from whose decisions there should be no appeal. But to suppose that errors and differences of opinion respecting religion are occasioned by this, is a mistake. This is evident from the fact, that while the apostles, who were inspired and infallible teachers, remained on earth, errors and mistakes prevailed among professing Christians no less than they do now. Some, for instance, were found in the Corinthian church who denied the resurrection of the dead. With a view to convince them that this opinion was erroneous, St. Paul here mentions some of the fatal consequences which would result from its being true. If the dead rise not, says he, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then also they that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

My friends, the mode of reasoning, which St. Paul here adopts with respect to one important doctrine of revelation, I wish to adopt with respect to the whole of revelation. I wish to show you what would be our situation without the Bible; what would be the consequence, if it could be proved that the Bible is not a revelation from God. This, I suspect, is a subject to which you have not sufficiently attended. I suspect that some of you, who secretly hope, or at least wish, that the Bible may prove false, are not aware what would be the consequences, could your wishes be gratified. I suspect that others, who feel convinced of its truth, are not sufficiently sensible of the worth of such a revelation, and, of course, are not sufficiently grateful for it. Favor me then with your attention, while I attempt to show what would be our situation without the Bible; what the consequences of its being proved to be false.

I. If we had no Bible, or if the Bible could be proved to be false, we should be entirely ignorant of the origin of our race, and of the world which we inhabit. I need not remind you, that this is the only book which even pretends to give us any authentic or satisfactory information on this subject. Indeed it is evident from the nature of things, that nothing can be known by us respecting the formation of the world, except it be communicated by revelation; since no human being could then be alive to witness that event, or to transmit to us any information respecting it. Nor could the first individuals of our race know any thing of the cause to which they were indebted for their existence, unless a knowledge of it were communicated to them by immediate revelation. Nay more, not only all the knowledge we have of the origin of the world, but all the information which we possess respecting the history of mankind for many ages, is contained in the Bible. No uninspired history, on which the smallest reliance can be placed, pretends to relate any event which occurred more than three thousand years ago, unless we except the history of Josephus, a Jewish writer, whose information was evidently derived from the Scriptures. If then we renounce the Scriptures, we must be content to remain in total ignorance of the origin of the world, of its inhabitants, and of every thing respecting them which occurred more than three thousand years ago. If it be said, that reason, unenlightened by revelation, might have inferred that the world and its inhab-

itants must have had a Creator, — I answer, it is true that, if the minds of men had not been blinded by sin, they might have discovered this truth; but it is certain that they never did discover it. On the contrary, whenever they have attempted, as they often have done, to account for the existence of the world and its inhabitants, they have run into the grossest and most ridiculous absurdities.

For instance, one of the most acute philosophical authors of antiquity, writing on this subject, informs us, that an infinite number of atoms had existed from all eternity; that, some how or other these atoms were put in motion, and that while moving about they happened to come together and form a world, out of which plants, animals and men spontaneously sprung up. But perhaps some will say, these were the sentiments of men in the early and ignorant ages of the world. Since reason has been more cultivated, and learning has increased, men know better than to believe such absurdities. We will reply to this remark, by giving you a modern theory respecting the formation of the world; a theory, which has been invented, published and defended within a few years, by some of the most learned philosophers of the age. According to this theory, the sun had either existed from all eternity, or was formed, nobody knows how, and a comet made and put in motion in a similar way, passing by the sun, struck off a large piece of it by a blow of its tail, and by the same blow communicated to the piece thus struck off, a rotary motion, which caused it to revolve till it acquired a globular form. All this happened many millions of years ago, and during this period, the new-made world, being made to revolve round the sun, collected all the particles of dust which came in its way, till it had acquired soil sufficient to support plants, animals and men, which sprung up upon it, one after the other. In a similar way, all other planets were formed. As to the moon, that was once a part of this world, and was blown out of it by a tremendous volcano, whose fires are now quenched. Indeed, others suppose that this world and all the planets were, in a similar manner, blown out of the sun. Such, my hearers, are the theories of those whom the world styles philosophers; such the absurdities into which grave and learned men are left to fall, when they renounce the Scriptures. And if we renounce the Scriptures, what can we do better than adopt some of these

theories. Human reason unenlightened by revelation, can invent no better, no more plausible way of accounting for the creation of the world and its inhabitants. If you ask, why can not men without the Bible allow that there is a God, who created all things? I answer,—I am not obliged to show why they cannot. It is sufficient for me to show, that, without a revelation, they do not, and never have done this. This it is easy to show. It is easy to prove, by appealing to history and to facts, that no nation under heaven, either in the first ages, or the present day, has been able to form a rational, or even a plausible conjecture, respecting the origin of the world; much less to arrive at any thing that could be called knowledge on this subject. Perhaps, however, the reason of this will appear from the next remark, to which I propose to call your attention, which is this:

II. If we had no Bible, or if the Bible could be proved to be false, we should have no knowledge of God, not even of his existence. What strange, absurd and contradictory opinions have in all ages been entertained, on this subject, by those who were destitute of revelation, we endeavored to show you on the last Lord's day. Without a revelation, no man, nor body of men has ever been able to ascertain even the existence of one supreme, self-existent God; much less have they been able to discover his moral character, perfections and designs. Even if it should be allowed that a few individuals have formed conjectures on this subject, which had borne some faint resemblance to the truth, yet it would be highly improper to dignify those conjectures with the name of knowledge. It is true that the existence, and some of the natural perfections of God might have been inferred from the works of creation, had not mankind been blinded by sinful prejudice and ignorance; for the apostle informs us, that the invisible things of God are clearly to be seen from the foundation of the world, being understood by the things that are made; and hence he concludes that the heathen are without excuse.

But though the invisible things of God might have been seen and understood in the contemplation of his works, it is certain they never were seen or understood in any degree by those who are destitute of the Bible; for they have all been either atheists or polytheists; have either denied the existence of God, or believed in many gods. And even if men had discovered the

existence and natural perfections of God, without a revelation, they must still have been entirely ignorant of his moral character, and of his design in creating the world; for, as we lately observed, no creature could have penetrated into his mind or into his heart, to discover what is there. To say all in a word; God alone knows himself, his designs, his will, or what will please him. He alone, therefore, can communicate a knowledge of these things to us; and this knowledge can be communicated only by a revelation, or, in other words, only by the Bible, since we have no other book that even pretends to be a revelation from him. Take away the Bible then, and you take away all knowledge of God, and leave us nothing but errors, dreams, and fables. And would this be a small evil? Surely, if any knowledge can be of importance to mankind, it must be a knowledge of the being who created them, and on whom they are of course entirely dependent. This will appear still more evident, if we consider that, without a knowledge of God, we cannot know what will please, or what will displease him; how he is to be worshipped, or whether he is to be worshipped at all. All these subjects, indeed every subject connected with God, is at once wrapped up in impenetrable darkness, if the Scriptures be false.

III. If we had not the Bible, or if the Bible should be proved to be false, we could not rationally, or even plausibly account for the existence and prevalence of natural and moral evil in the world. We see that there is, and for many ages has been, much of both. We know that, from the remotest period to which history extends, the world has been full of discord, wars, confusion and misery. And that whenever men have not been restrained by human laws, they have harassed and destroyed each other like wild beasts. We see that the malignant passions, by which these evils are occasioned, begin to appear in children at a very early age. And we know that all men are subject to pain, disease and death. Now how shall we account for these things? The Scriptures account for them in a manner which, if it does not satisfy us, is at least plain and intelligible. They teach us that death is the consequence of sin, and that all our distresses are to be traced to the same source. But if we reject the account which they give, we cannot form even a plausible conjecture respecting this subject; but must be content to live

in darkness, uncertainty, and perplexity. If it be said, this is of little consequence; I answer, it is of the greatest consequence. A knowledge of the nature of moral evil, and of the causes of natural evil, is necessary to enable us to escape from either. This knowledge is therefore absolutely requisite to our happiness. But perhaps it will be said that the surest way, and indeed the only way to secure happiness, is to avoid what is wrong and do what is right, and that mankind might easily learn this without the Bible. To this I reply, by observing,

IV. That if we had no Bible, or if the Bible should be proved false, men could never know what is right or wrong, or even whether there is any such thing as right and wrong. The terms, right and wrong, always have reference to some rule. What agrees with this rule, is said to be right, and what disagrees with it, is said to be wrong. We must then have some rule, by which to judge, before we can decide whether any conduct is right or wrong. But if you take away the Bible, we have no rule by which to judge. If any deny this, I ask them where any rule is to be found, except in the Bible? If you refer me to human laws,—I reply, these laws differ widely in different ages and parts of the world. What is required by the laws of one age or country, is forbidden by those of another. Since these human laws differ among themselves, and are continually changing, they can never be a safe, unerring rule by which to decide what is right or wrong. Will you then refer me to human reason, or to conscience, for a rule? But the understandings and consciences of men differ as widely as do their laws. What seems reasonable to one, seems unreasonable to another. What one man's conscience approves, as a correct, praiseworthy action, another's conscience condemns as a heinous crime. But perhaps you will say, that is right which tends to produce happiness, while that which tends to occasion misery is wrong. But who can tell what does tend to produce happiness or misery? Every action draws after it a long train of consequences or effects. Some of these consequences may be productive of happiness, and others of misery; and unless we could foresee all future events, we cannot tell whether any given action will produce happiness or misery on the whole.

Besides, men are very far from being agreed in their opinions respecting happiness. One places it in one thing, another in

something else very different. This rule is therefore insufficient in itself, and its application is impracticable. Will you then say, the will of God must be the only rule of right and wrong? True: but remember, that without the Bible we know nothing of God, and, of course, nothing of his will. If then we renounce the Bible, we renounce the only rule by which we can distinguish right from wrong, or prove that there is any such thing as either. The universe is left without a moral governor, and right and wrong, virtue and vice, holiness and sin, are mere names; there is no reason to expect that the good will ever be rewarded, or the wicked punished. Every man is at liberty to do that which is right in his own eyes.

V. If we were without the Bible, or if the Bible could be proved to be false, we should know nothing of a future state, or of the immortality of the soul. Reason, my friends, can never prove that the soul is immortal, or that the body will be raised again. This is evident from the facts, that she never has been able to discover either of these truths, and that even at the present day, many learned men deny them both. It is not long since the representatives of a numerous civilized nation ordered the words, *death is an eternal sleep*, to be inserted over the portals of their grave-yards. Indeed, if there be a future state, an eternal world, into which the soul enters after death, no one but an inhabitant of that world can assure us of the fact; for it is not an object of our senses, nor can it be discovered by reasoning. All that men ever have done, all that they can do, without a revelation from God, is to conjecture, or at most to suppose it probable, that there is a future state, and that the soul is immortal. But these conjectures and surmises are of no use. They are too weak to build upon. In fact, they only serve to produce uneasiness and anxiety in the prospect of death; for while they lead men to suspect that there possibly may be a future state, they can afford them no shadow of information respecting that state. They cannot tell us whether we shall be happy or miserable there. And if we reflect calmly on the subject, we shall find much more reason to fear misery, than to hope for happiness in a future state. We find this world full of evils. We suffer much in passing through it; we find the causes of these evils and sufferings deeply rooted in our nature. We see most of those who die, appear to die in pain. Who then can assure us,

or what reason have we to hope, that the other world will be less full of evil than this; that we shall not suffer there as much or more than we suffer here; that the seeds of sorrow and suffering, which are sown in our nature, will be eradicated; that those who die in pain will, after death, taste nothing but pleasure? My friends, without the Bible, we can have no reason to hope for happiness after death. The best we can rationally hope for, if the Bible be false, is to die like the brutes, to plunge into the gulf of annihilation. In fact, this is all which those, who reject the Bible, usually do hope for; and even their hope of this, if that may be called hope which seems more like despair, is not unfrequently mingled with distressing fears of something worse. And as annihilation is the best fate we can rationally expect for ourselves, if the Bible be false, so it is the best which we can suppose to have happened to our departed friends. Yes, if the Bible be not true, you may well sorrow over their remains, as those that have no hope. You will never see them again. Their minds, as well as their bodies, are dead. All that once pleased and delighted you, all that excited your admiration, or engaged your affections, is put out, like last night's lamp, quenched in everlasting night. This too, if the Bible be not true, is, for aught you can tell, the fate of all who have gone before us. They who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished. The good and the bad, they who while alive ravaged, and they who blessed the world; they who expired uttering the language of execration and despair, and they whose expiring lips poured forth the seraphic strains of that heaven which they saw opening to their view, have all sunk down alike into eternal darkness and insensibility. But why do I talk of heaven? If the Bible be not true, there is no heaven, — none for us, none of which we know anything. Life and immortality have never been brought to light. He who professed to reveal them, and who called himself the Saviour of the world, was an imposter; the Gospel of salvation, the only real glad tidings which ever vibrated upon mortal man, is a cheat; the apostles who preached it, and the martyrs who sealed it with their blood, were deluded; and all the apparent holiness which it has produced in life, and all the joy and triumph which its disciples have expressed at death, were nothing but the effects of superstition and enthusiasm. But this is not all; for,

VI. If the Bible be not true, we are not only deprived of all hope of a future life, but of all consolation under the afflictions of the present. To support us under these afflictions, we have nothing that deserves the name of consolation, except what is drawn from the Bible. We are there taught, that the Lord reigns, that nothing happens by chance; that all creatures and works are under the superintendence of an infinitely wise, just, and good being, who will bring good out of evil, who will make all things work together for good to them that love him, and cause their light afflictions, which endure but for a moment, to work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We are taught, that as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; that in the person of his Son, our Saviour, we have a friend who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and that he is our surety for the fulfilment of all those exceedingly great and precious promises, with which the Scriptures are filled. When we turn from our own personal sorrows to contemplate the miseries of our wretched race, we are consoled by assurances, that the world shall not always continue in its present wretched state; that the dawn of a glorious day is at hand; a day, in which the knowledge of God shall cover the earth, even as the waters cover the seas; in which the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour, who shall reign forever; a day in which men shall beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more; a day in which righteousness and peace and holy joy shall universally prevail. But if the Bible be not true, all these springs of consolation are dried up in a moment. Then all things are governed by chance, or by some agent of whom we know nothing, and who, for aught we can tell, may be feeble, unjust or cruel, and take delight in the misery of his creatures.

Then we have no ground to hope, that good will ever be brought out of evil, or that any of our afflictions will be productive of the smallest advantage, either to ourselves or to others. Then we have no Father, no Saviour, no friend above to pity our sorrows, to hear our complaints, to support us by his power, or to guide us by his wisdom. What is still more discouraging, we have no reason to hope that the situation of our wretched race will ever be ameliorated, or their miseries ever come to an

end. Nothing can be rationally anticipated, but an endless succession of the same crimes, wars, revolutions and convulsions, which have so long filled the world with blood, and the hearts of its inhabitants with anguish; for there is not the smallest reason to suppose, that mankind are really wiser or better now, than they were thirty centuries ago. If at present any appearances, which encourage us to hope for the prevalence of peace, are to be seen, they are occasioned solely by the influence of the Bible. But if this be false, its influence cannot long continue to operate. Men will burst its bands, and go on as before. Despair then, you, who sorrow, for you never will be comforted. Despair ye, who weep for the miseries of man; for there is no hope that they will ever end. Despair ye, who are looking with anxious eyes for the dawn of a brighter day; for no day is ever to dawn on this wretched world. There is no star of Bethlehem; no Sun of righteousness, to rise and shine upon it, with healing in his beams. No; it is destined to be shrouded for ever in seven-fold night, a night without a star, without a moon, without a morning. Rejoice then, ye wicked, for ye will never be punished. Despair ye good, for ye will never be rewarded.

Thus, my friends, have I given you a sketch, a very imperfect sketch, of what would have been our situation without the Bible; of the consequences which would result from its being shown to be false. And now permit me to ask those of you, who sometimes doubt for a moment whether the Bible is true; do you feel willing to encounter these consequences, to plunge into such a situation? Can you be content to sit down in total ignorance respecting the origin and end of our race and of the world we inhabit? Can you be willing, since it is possible there may be a God, to know nothing of his nature, his character, and his designs; nothing of what he requires, of what he does, or what he means to do with his creatures? Can you cheerfully consent to remain ignorant, whether your souls are mortal, or immortal; whether there is or is not a future state; whether if there is such a state, happiness or misery awaits you there? In a word, are you willing to sign away all your right and title to the information which the Bible communicates, and to the promises which it contains, to the happiness, to the life and immortality which it reveals? That some men are willing to do this, I cannot doubt; for many have done it.

Whether any of you would be willing to do it, whether any of you would secretly rejoice to be assured that the Bible is false, I shall not pretend to determine. If you would, how awfully depraved, how desperately wicked must be your hearts! Should you hear a man wish, that there were no such things as human law, you would not hesitate to pronounce him a desperate character. You would conclude, that since he was an enemy to the laws, the law was an enemy to him; that he wished to perpetrate those crimes which the law forbids; and that he was, of course, a dangerous man, and a foe to the peace of society. So if any of you wish that the Bible were false, it is fair to conclude that you are enemies to the Bible, enemies to its author, enemies to his requirements, and enemies to the human race. You would deprive men of light, of peace, of hope, of immortality. You would reduce them and yourselves to the condition of the beasts that perish. If you would not do this; if you cannot consent to sign away all share in the contents of revelation, remember that the only alternative is to embrace it cordially, to believe and obey it sincerely and universally. If you receive it at all, you must receive it as a whole; for nothing can be more unreasonable, more disengenuous, or more dangerous, than to receive some parts, and reject others. You must also receive it not as the word of man, but as the word of God, as a book which speaks with all his authority, and from whose decisions there is no appeal. Which of these courses then will you follow? In what light will you henceforth regard the Bible? It surely is time to come to some settled conclusion respecting a subject of so much importance. And yet many of you are evidently undecided. You will neither cordially receive the Bible as the word of God, nor openly reject it as the mere words of men. You do not even know your own minds on this subject. Sometimes you seem disposed to allow that the Scriptures are from God. But no sooner do you find yourselves pressed by its contents, than you begin to dispute, and to reason, and complain, as if you thought them a human fabrication. When I see you come, Sabbath after Sabbath, to hear the Bible explained and enforced, I cannot but hope that you regard it as divine. But when I see how little deference you pay to its authority, how little influence it has upon your conduct through the week, I am compelled to suspect that you think it not better than a cun-

ningly devised fable. My friends, it is this indecision which ruins you. While you are delaying and hesitating in what manner to treat the Bible, time is rapidly passing away, and death is hastening on. How long, then, halt ye between two opinions? If the Bible is God's word, then believe and obey it as such. But if not, reject it at once, and no longer come here to listen to the superstitions and conjectures of men. Remember the awful doom of those, who are neither cold nor hot, neither open infidels, nor firm, constant believers. Remember that no character is more hateful in the sight of God, or more contemptible in the opinion of men, than a double-minded man, who is unstable in all his ways, and who does not know himself what he believes or what he denies.

To conclude. From what has been said, you, my friends, who believe and know the Bible to be true, may learn how highly you ought to prize it, and how great should be your gratitude to Him who has bestowed on the world this inestimable gift; and who has cast your lot in a land, where it is known, and given you satisfactory and infallible evidence of its divine original. Permit me to ask, whether you have not been, and whether you are not still, greatly deficient in this respect? Have you been duly sensible of the value of this gift, and of the blessings which it imparts, and of the dreadful situation in which we should be placed without it? Have you studied it, have you blessed God for it as you ought? If not, let what has been said prompt you to an immediate performance of these duties. Your Bible ought to be dearer to you than your daily bread, than the light of heaven, than the breath of life; for what would all these things, what would life itself be without it. O, then, praise, unceasingly praise God for the Bible; and remember that the most suitable and acceptable way in which you can express your gratitude for the gift of it, is to believe its doctrines, and to obey its precepts; to trust its promises, to be what it requires you to be, and hide it in your hearts, that you may not sin against its Author.

SERMON XCVI.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.—2 Corinthians v. 10.

To a mind that looks beyond present appearances, to future realities; and with the eye of faith, sees things which are not, as though they were, how solemn, how interesting is the scene before us. In this assembly, we behold an assembly of immortals, an assembly of candidates for eternity; a part of that vast assembly, which will one day stand exulting in triumph, or sinking in despair, before the tribunal of an avenging God. In every individual here present, we contemplate an heir of glory or a child of perdition; a future inhabitant of heaven, or a prisoner of hell; an embryo angel, or an infant fiend. Whatever diversity there may be in other respects, how different soever may be your character, pursuits and situations in life, to one of these classes, my friends, you all belong; for you must all appear before the judgment seat, to receive according to the deeds done in the body; and after the irrevocable sentence is pronounced, must each of you depart accursed into everlasting fire, or enter blessed into life eternal.

As there is no middle character between the righteous and the wicked in this world, so there will be no intermediate state be-

tween heaven and hell in the next; but one of these is the habitation finally appointed for all living.

And do you feel no anxiety, do you consider it a matter of no consequence, my friends, to know which of these will be your lot? You are usually sufficiently fond of looking forward beyond the present hour, and anticipating the future scenes of life; especially when any important event is before you. With anxious eagerness and curiosity, you look forward from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, and from manhood to age; and perhaps not a single hour arrives, which has not been the subject of frequent anticipation. Come then, and exercise for a few moments, an employment of which you are so fond. Let not your thoughts be ever confined to this narrow circle of three score years and ten; but for once take a bolder range and anticipate scenes equally certain, far more instructive and infinitely more important, than any which this life affords. Come and look forward to the final consummation of all things, when Christ shall be revealed in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those who know not God, and who are disobedient to the truth; when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise; and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; and the earth, with the works thereof, shall be burnt up. Come and look forward to that tremendous day, far more terrible to the self-condemned sinner, than all the horrors of dissolving nature, and a world on fire; which will unalterably determine our final destinies; and bestow on each of us an eternal weight of glory, or consign us over to the mansions of despair.

But the subject is too vast to be grasped at once by any finite intelligence. To assist our feeble faculties, let us consider it separately under the following particulars. The certainty of a future judgment; the Judge who will preside; the persons who will be judged; the things for which they will be called to an account, and the design of the whole transaction.

I. We are to inquire into the certainty of a future judgment, before which we all must appear, as the apostle asserts.

Of this, my friends, we shall soon see there is no room for doubt. No proposition of natural or revealed religion, not even that which regards the existence of a God, is accompanied with more convincing evidence than this. They are indeed truths necessarily and inseparably connected; for it is evident almost

to demonstration, that he who created must govern, and that he who governs must judge the world. We cannot possibly suppose, that an infinitely wise being would create man, and then leave him to himself, or to the sport of blind accident. No, he must have had some suitable design in his creation; and the only design of a being infinitely holy, just, and good, of which we can form any conception, is his own glory as connected with the greatest possible happiness of his creatures. To accomplish this design, certain laws and regulations are necessary; and if his creatures disobey these regulations, all his perfections join in requiring that they should be restrained and punished. Experience however, abundantly shows that, in this world, no adequate punishment is inflicted; that there is little or no apparent distinction between the bad and the good; but that all things come alike to all; that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. Hence it appears, that there must be a future day of recompense and retribution, when God will vindicate his own character, reward his faithful friends, and convince the assembled world that his righteous laws are not to be violated with impunity.

Omitting the arguments which might be deduced from the present life, as being a state of probation, and others equally cogent, we may observe, secondly, that the existence of natural conscience also proves the certainty of a future judgment. Wherever we see inferior courts and subordinate officers, we naturally conclude there is some superior power from whom their authority is derived, and by whom their proceedings will be ratified and sanctioned. In the same manner, when we see conscience summoning us to her bar and passing sentence on every thought, word and action, we cannot avoid concluding, that he who placed this monitor in our breasts, and from whom its power and authority are derived, will at some future period confirm her decisions by his own decree. But without insisting on these, and other arguments of a similar nature, the certainty of a future judgment is sufficiently proved in the word of God; and I hope, my friends, you are not so little acquainted with this word as to render it necessary to quote the numerous passages in which it is taught in the plainest terms. Certainly none who acknowledge its divine authority, (and to such only do we ad-

dress ourselves; for how can we hope to be heard by those to whom God has spoken in vain?) can possibly doubt that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. This brings us, as was proposed,

II. To inquire who will be the Judge on this solemn occason; who is the man that God hath ordained; and this is no other than the man Christ Jesus, even he, who was born of the virgin Mary, who was crucified, and who rose and ascended to heaven, shall so come, in like manner; and before him shall be gathered all nations. This truth our blessed Saviour abundantly taught while on earth; and there seems in this appointment the same fitness and propriety, as in all other parts of the divine conduct. It is certainly highly fit and proper, that he who made and redeemed should also judge the world, and that he who humbled himself below all creatures should also be exalted above all, so that to him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess him Lord to the praise and glory of God the Father. Then will his exaltation be complete. Every thing will then manifestly appear to be put under him. The glory in which he will then appear will be greater than he has ever yet assumed, greater than we could support the sight of, while clothed with mortality. At the creation he was surrounded by hosts of morning stars, who sung together, and the sons of God, who shouted for joy; and at the dispensation of the law on Sinai, he was arrayed in all the majesty and terror which the elements could afford. But on this still more awful occasion, he will come, not in his own glory only, but in that of his Father, and the holy angels. Heaven will pour forth all her armies to grace his triumph, and spread around him all her ineffable glories in one unremitted blaze of splendor, before which the sun will fade away, and even archangels veil their faces; while,

> From his keen glance affrighted worlds retire,
> He speaks in thunder and he breathes in fire.

His countenance, like the pillar of cloud between the Israelites and Egyptians, will present a double appearance; and though clothed with the rainbow of peace toward his friends, it will lower on his enemies like a stormy sky; and while his eye, at

every glance, pours upon the former a flood of joy, it will flash lightnings on the latter, which will scorch their inmost souls, and fill them with unutterable, inconceivable anguish. Then shall he come in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him, and yours, my friends, among the rest. Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they who condemned him as guilty of blasphemy will find, to their eternal shame and confusion will find, that he uttered a solemn truth when he said, Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven to judge the world at the last day. Then shall his murderers find, that he whom they buffeted, scourged, mocked, and crucified, was indeed the Lord of life and glory, and they, with all who have since despised and all who are now despising his offered grace, will then be convinced by their own sad experience, that whosoever falls on this stone shall be broken, and that on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

And remember, O sinner, that you too must see him. Remember that in the person of your judge, you will see the Saviour whose offers of mercy you are now slighting; whose commands you are disobeying, and whose institutions you are neglecting, and concerning whom you are saying, in your hearts, We will not have this man to reign over us. And O, that this remembrance might lead you to obey the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when yet his wrath is kindled but a little. But blessed are all they who put their trust in him; for they too shall see him. Yes, my Christian friends, you who now believe and rejoice in him, together with those who shall now confess him before men, shall see him who is so precious to your souls in that situation where you now desire and will then rejoice to see him, exalted to the throne of the universe, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named in heaven or earth. Now perhaps rivers of tears run down your eyes, because men keep not his law, and because his sacred name is profaned. But then his name shall be glorious, his law shall be magnified, and all tears shall be forever wiped from your eyes. In your judge, you will see the friend, whose love was stronger than death; the physician, who healed your wounds with his own blood; the shepherd who gathered you in his arms and carried you in his

bosom; nay more, your head in whom you are all united and in whom you will judge the world. But it was proposed to consider,

III. The persons who will be judged. And these are the whole human race, for we must all appear. There will be no exceptions. In vain shall any call upon the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them. Flight, resistance, threats and entreaties will alike be vain. There must appear rulers, with their subjects; parents, with their children; ministers, with their people; masters, with their servants; and blind guides, with their blinded followers. There will be present all who have lived in the world, from creation down to the present day; there our first parents will contemplate, with various emotions, the long line of their descendants, while they, on the other hand, will behold their common father. There will be found the inhabitants of the old world, the men of Sodom and Gomorrha, the host of Pharaoh, with their proud king, and the ancient inhabitants of Canaan, with the Israelites, their rebellious and idolatrous successors. There will be seen Noah and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Enoch and Elijah, Joseph and Moses, with all the other patriarchs and prophets, in a long succession. There will also be assembled the proud, cruel, hypocritical pharisees, with the priests and rulers who with such inveterate malice persecuted him, who will then be their Judge. There Pilate, with Herod, shall appear before him, who once stood at his iniquitous tribunal, and receive the reward of his injustice and cowardice. There will be found all of whom we read in profane and sacred history; the Apostles and Martyrs, with their persecutors, the famous heroes and conquerors, who have so often deluged the world with blood, and were highly esteemed among men, but were an abomination in the sight of the Lord; the statesmen, the philosophers and great ones of the earth, with all that is noble, all that is vile among mankind.

Further, there will be present all who are now on the earth, they who now fill the mouths of men with their greatness, and think this world too narrow for their fame; they who are now envied for their beauty, wealth, honors, or accomplishments; they who now excite the love or hatred, the hopes or fears, the admiration or contempt of mankind, will then stand out in their

naked characters. All disguises will then be stripped off, all human distinctions will be destroyed, and the only difference which will then be of any avail, is the grand, the eternal distinction between saints and sinners. The scoffers who are now asking, where is the promise of his coming, who have wasted their lives and abused their talents in neglecting or denying a future judgment, will find to their cost, that, verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth, and that while they have been following lying vanities, they have forsaken their own mercies and destroyed themselves, with all their disciples. But what is this, my friends, that we are doing? Have we forgotten that we too must be present on this solemn occasion, and that we shall be too much occupied with our own concerns to feel any curiosity respecting the affairs of others? Yes, every individual in this assembly, they who hear as well as he that speaks, must there make his appearance. As certain as you are now assembled in this house; as certain as you now behold each other; as certain as you now hear these words, so surely shall you all be assembled at the judgment seat of Christ; behold his face and hear the sentence, Come, ye blessed! or Depart, ye cursed! addressed to each of yourselves.

IV. It was proposed to consider the things for which this innumerable multitude will be called to give an account:—and these are, as we learn from our text, all the things done here in the body, whether good or bad. By the things done in the body, are intended not only external actions, but also words and the thoughts and intents of the heart. Of every idle word that men shall speak, says the Judge, shall they give an account in the day of judgment. God shall bring every secret thing into judgment, and will judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. The great rule by which these things will be tried, is the divine law; and how this law will be interpreted, our Saviour has himself informed us. He has declared, that every sinful desire, is no less a breach of its requirements, and no less exposes us to its dreadful curse, than the most open violation; and he will condemn, as breakers of the sixth command, not only all actual murderers, but all who have at any time indulged feelings of malice, hatred, envy, or revenge against their neighbors. Not only all adulterers and adulteresses, but all who have not maintained the strictest purity in thought, word and deed, will also

fall under his just condemnation. He who has coveted, as well as he who has actually stolen his neighbor's property will be found guilty. Nay more, not only they who hate God and their neighbor, but they who do not love God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind, and their neighbor as themselves, must be condemned by the law of God. It is highly worthy of notice, that, in all the descriptions which our Saviour has given of the day of judgment, he represents himself as dooming sinners to the fire prepared for the devil and his angels, not for what the world call crimes, not for injuring their fellow creatures, or disturbing the peace of society; but for being unprofitable servants, for neglecting to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, to receive the stranger, and visit the sick. It is not so much against sins of commission, that threatnings are denounced in the word of God. He that believeth not shall be damned. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Not only every tree that bringeth forth bad fruit, but every tree that does not bring forth good fruit, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. These regulations may seem, and indeed must seem to the unhumbled heart, too rigid and severe; but, my friends, if the word of God be true; if Christ the Judge abide by his own positive declarations; by these regulations must every thought, word and action be tried. To this standard must the conduct of every individual be brought. In this balance must every individual be weighed. And do you feel no apprehensions of being found wanting? Have you never committed one sin, in thought, word or deed; and have you perfectly fulfilled all righteousness? If the world at large knows of nothing criminal in your conduct, will your families, will your own consciences, will the all-seeing and heart-searching God acquit you? Remember that cursed is he who continueth not in all things, written in the book of the law, to do them. If you have ever committed one sin, however small, if you have ever omitted one duty however trifling, you are exposed to this curse; and it will most assuredly sink you in everlasting perdition, unless you seek and obtain an interest in him, who has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. Suppose you were to be called in question for those things only which you have done or omitted since you came into this house, could you hope to be acquitted? Have you indulged no wandering

thoughts, no vain nor vicious imaginations; and have you felt perfect love to God and your neighbor during the short time you have been here present? If not, you must unavoidably perish, though the remainder of your lives were as pure as that of Adam before the fall, unless you earnestly apply to him, who is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins; for, whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. And if you cannot justify your conduct for one hour; if you have been guilty of sins since you came into this house, which, unless repented of, expose you to eternal death; how will you answer for a whole life of iniquity? How will you answer for the follies of childhood, the vices of youth, and the sins of riper years? What account can you give of the talents with which you have been entrusted; of your time, your property, your reputation, your reasoning powers, and your opportunities of doing or getting good? All these things must be accounted for, to the last tittle; and not only your external improvement of them, but, the motives from which you acted, will be closely examined. Then all disguises will be stripped off; every action will be traced to its true source; every work of darkness shall be laid before the sun, and all the foolish, vain, wicked and abominable thoughts, wishes and desires, which are now so carefully concealed, will then be exposed to the view of angels and men. And how will you be able to bear this? Above all, how will you answer your long continued and obstinate rejection of Christ; for slighting his offers of pardon and reconciliation, and for neglecting his word, his Sabbaths, and institutions? This is the sin of sins; it is the most provoking and inexcusable offence of which men can be guilty; it is the sin which will heat seven times hotter the furnace of God's wrath, and render the doom of those who are guilty of it, more intolerable than that of Sodom and Gomorrha. We come now,

V. To consider the design of these solemn transactions, viz: That every one may receive the things done in the body whether they be good or bad.

We are not to consider this trial as a mere matter of form, a thing of no consequence. No, it is intended to convince the assembled world of the justice of the sentence which is to follow, by which the righteous will be called to inherit everlasting life, and the wicked doomed to depart accursed into everlasting burn-

ings, prepared for the devil and his angels. By this sentence, every action however trifling, shall receive its just recompense of reward. Not a sin shall be committed, not a duty neglected, not a moment misspent, not a profane or idle word uttered, not a vicious thought or desire indulged, but shall aggravate the punishment of the finally impenitent. Yes, my friends, whether you know, whether you consider, whether you believe it or not, you are acting for eternity; and innumerable millions of ages hence, you will continue to feel the consequences of your present conduct in its minutest part. And while this consideration checks the sinner in his mad career, let it animate those of you who are Christians indeed, to run with new vigor and alacrity the race set before you; you too are acting for eternity, and your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. Not a sigh shall you breathe, not a prayer shall you utter, not a tear shall you shed, not one good action shall you ever perform; but shall increase your future felicity. For even a cup of cold water given from love to the Lord Jesus shall, we are assured, by no means lose its reward. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not; and he that soweth bountifully in this world shall reap also bountifully in the world to come. There will doubtless be degrees, both in happiness and misery; and as among a number of vessels thrown into the sea, some may contain more than others, though all be alike full; so some vessels of mercy will be capable of containing more felicity than others, though all will be happy to the extent of their capacities; and in like manner some vessels of wrath will be capable of containing more than others, of those vials of divine vengeance, which will be poured out upon the wicked to all eternity.

IMPROVEMENT. Must we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ? Then surely it becomes us diligently to inquire whether we are prepared for this all-important event. And suffer me, with that solemnity which such a subject demands, to ask each individual here present, if you should, this moment, be called to the bar of God, what sentence have you reason to suppose he would pass on you? Pause and reflect, and let conscience answer. And what does she answer? To some, I hope to many of you, she whispers peace and pardon through the

blood of Christ, and an assurance that you are accepted in the Beloved. Yet even in this case, there is great danger of self deception; for though our own hearts condemn us not, yet God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. Many will come to the Judge in that day, saying, Lord, have we not eaten and drank in thy presence, and hast thou not taught in our streets? Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. And so perhaps many here present can say, Lord, have we not eaten and drank at thy table; have we not called ourselves by thy name; have we not read thy word, attended thy worship, and kept thine ordinances? But if you can say nothing more than this, the Judge will profess unto you, as he will unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. If you are trusting to any works of righteousness which you have done; any external morality and decency of conduct; or if, on the other hand, you are pretending to trust in the righteousness of Christ, without imitating his example and obeying his commands; your hope is vain, your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins. Faith without works, or works without faith, are alike, but a sandy foundation. Examine then, diligently, the foundation on which your eternal hope is built; and remember, that, not those who say unto Christ, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of our heavenly Father.

But are there not also many here present, who have nothing on which to found a false hope; many whose consciences answer too loudly to be disregarded, that, were they now called to the judgment seat, they could expect nothing but the reward of the wicked? and that, if they die in their present state, they cannot see the kingdom of heaven? If there be any of you, who are sensible that this is their alarming situation; how long, let me ask, do you mean to remain in it? Will you waste days, months and years, thus every moment exposed to irretrievable destruction? Do you consider, ye who sit thus calmly and unconcernedly on the crumbling brink of hell, that the brittle thread of life, which ten thousand dangers threaten hourly to break, is all that preserves you from everlasting burnings? O, could the cloud be dissipated, which conceals eternity from your

view; could you see the slippery precipice on which you stand, and the unfathomable gulf which even now yawns to receive you; if the sight did not at once drive you to madness, despair and death, how would you cry for mercy and deliverance; you would neither give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you had made your peace with an offended God.

I know, my friends, these truths are not pleasant. I know that death and judgment are subjects on which you do not love to dwell; but though they are unpleasant, they are important; and the time will arrive when you must make them the subject of your meditations. But why do you suffer them to be unpleasant? Why do you not so conduct as to make God your friend, and then the king of terrors will be viewed as the portal of paradise, and eternity will be the subject of your most delightful contemplations. Remember that, if the thoughts of death and judgment be unpleasant, it is an almost certain proof that you are not prepared for their approach. If this be the case, delay not your preparation for a single hour. God is angry with the wicked every day. Do not therefore risk the consequences of living another hour exposed to his just displeasure, but suffer me to urge, to exhort, to beseech you, with all possible earnestness, to flee from the wrath to come.

Secondly. Is the Lord Jesus Christ appointed to be the Judge of quick and dead? and does our final destiny depend on his verdict? Of what infinite importance then is it, to have him for our friend. If you were soon to appear at an earthly bar, where your lives, your characters or property were at stake, how earnest, how anxious would you be, and how careful to omit nothing which had any tendency to secure the favor of your Judge, and produce a favorable issue? And will you then remain entirely idle and unconcerned, where your eternal interests are at stake? When the Judge himself offers to be your advocate, will you madly refuse acceptance? He is now willing to be your friend; nay more, he is beseeching you to be reconciled to God; and will you slight and despise his entreaties? Now his voice is love, his words are mild, his countenance beams with compassion, and his heart overflows with tenderness for perishing sinners. He now offers you a full and free pardon of your sins, and an interest in his righteousness, without money and without price. The only condition on your part is thank-

fully to receive it. And now, will you receive it on these terms, or not? I call upon you to choose this day, this hour, nay, this very moment, whom you will serve. Will you have Christ to reign over you or not? Say that you will, say it sincerely, say it from the heart, and heaven is yours.

But if you think proper to give a different answer, remember, I charge you remember, that you must give an account thereof in the day of Judgment. Then when the earth is wrapt in flames, when the atmosphere becomes like the blast of a furnace, when the ocean is but as oil to increase the conflagration, then you will feel the worth and the want of that friend you proudly reject. Then you will find that it is not a light thing to have despised a crucified Saviour. Then will the door of mercy be forever shut against you, and the Judge will then refuse to be your friend. Then will his countenance be like lightning, and his eyes like a flame of fire; his voice more dreadful than the archangel's trump, and his breath like a devouring flame, burning even to the lowest hell. What iniquity didst thou find in me, O sinner, will he then demand, that thou wouldst not have me to reign over thee? Was not my yoke easy, and my burden light? Why then didst thou refuse to bear them? Why didst thou reject and despise my offers of mercy, and pour contempt on those blessings I died to purchase? Why grieve my Holy Spirit, why turn a deaf ear to all the warnings I sent thee in my word, my ordinances and providences? and why, when my faithful ambassadors besought thee for my sake to be reconciled to God, why didst thou refuse? Didst thou not hear what was thy duty? didst thou not live in a land of gospel light and liberty? wast thou not often told of this day, and did not conscience warn thee, that, for all thy sins God would bring thee into judgment? Was there nothing due to me for my goodness? Did I not love, did I not die for thee? Was I not, for thy sake, scourged, mocked and crucified? Did I not, for thy sake, exchange a throne in heaven, for a manger on earth; and the praises of angels for the blasphemies of men? Why then hast thou despised my name, and cast my laws behind thy back? And what answer, O sinner, are you prepared to make to questions like these. Will you dare offer to your Judge those vain and frivolous excuses with which you now quiet your conscience and deceive yourself? Will you dare

come to the bar of God, and tell him that he was a hard master; that his law was too severe, that his word was unintelligible, that you could not learn your duty, that you were unable to repent and believe? Consider, O consider well what answer you are prepared to give, and see that it be such an one as you dare rest your hopes upon, and defend at the bar of a heart-searching Judge. Consider all these things, ye who are now forgetting God, lest he tear you in pieces as a lion, and there be none to deliver; and let this consideration rouse you from your lethargy to lay hold on the hope set before you. Do not stand lingering and delaying as did Lot, in Sodom, but suffer me to hasten you as the angels did him; for the wrath of God is upon the state in which you now are, and the fiery storm of divine vengeance is ready every moment to burst upon your heads. O then fly, fly quickly, fly immediately; escape for your lives; look not behind you, but hasten to the mountains pointed out, even to Christ, the eternal Rock of ages, lest ye die. As sure, O sinner, as thy soul liveth, as sure as God lives, there is but a step between thee and death. But flee now unto Christ, and your soul shall live.

Here, my friends, I had intended to have done; but I know not how to leave you; I know not how to desist. Who can behold his fellow creatures, fellow immortals, running headlong the broad road to destruction; eternal, irretrievable, destruction, without endeavoring to arrest their progress, and pluck them as brands out of the burnings? If you be not firmly resolved to perish, if you be not bent on death, if you be not in love with hell; I entreat, I beseech, I implore you, for the sake of your own immortal souls, and by all your hopes of future happiness, to hear me. And yet what more shall I, what more indeed can I say? If the joys of heaven cannot allure, nor the torments of hell terrify you; if the dying love of the Lord Jesus will not melt, nor the dread of his anger subdue your hearts, how can we hope that any other motives will be more successful? Yet hopeless as is the attempt, fain would I bring some new argument, some more powerful consideration to lead you to prepare for what is before you. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, fain would I persuade you to escape their pains; fain would I urge you, not utterly to destroy yourselves, not to plunge yourselves into remediless ruin, wretchedness and despair; wretchedness which

will be dreadfully aggravated by the reflection that you were warned of its approach, and might once have avoided it. Whatever you may now think, it is not a light thing to dwell with devouring flames; it is no trifle to inhabit everlasting burnings; it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. O, that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end. But enough; words are vain, and vain are all human efforts. We cannot force you to be wise, we cannot compel you. But I call heaven and earth to witness this day against you, that life and death have been now set before you; that you have been warned of your danger and the remedy; and if you perish, your blood must be upon your own heads.

And now, my friends, what are your resolutions, what answer will you return to him that sent me? Some of you will perhaps adopt the language of the rebellious Jews, and say, As to the word which thou hast spoken unto us this day, we will not regard it; but will certainly do whatsoever goeth out of our mouths. If this be your determination, we may pity you, we may weep for you, we may pray for you, but we cannot help you. You must do as you please. But if there be any of a different purpose, any who tremble at the word of the Lord, let them retire from the house of God to their closets, and there throwing themselves at the feet of the compassionate Jesus, let them confess their sins, and implore that that blood, which cleanseth from all sin, may be applied to their souls, and they shall, most assuredly, find mercy.

SERMON XCVII.

WAITING FOR DEATH.

All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.—Job xiv. 14.

These are the words of Job. The resolution which they express was formed by him when he was in the most wretched state, to which a good man can be reduced. The overwhelming weight of his afflictions, combined with the sudden and surprising manner in which they assailed him, had previously extracted from him some passionate wishes for a speedy dissolution; and even in this chapter, he cries to God, O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave! But in our text he seems to correct himself, and resolves, whatever might be his afflictions, to bear them patiently, till God's appointed time for removing him from this world should arrive: All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. My friends, we are all like Job, mortal; like him we may be assailed by severe afflictions, and tempted to wish impatiently for death; but we ought, like him, to check these impatient wishes, and resolve to wait till our change comes. In meditating on this passage I propose,

I. To consider death as a change.

II. To show that there is a time appointed for us to continue on earth, at the expiration of which, this change will take place.

III. To state what is implied in waiting all the days of this appointed time.

1. We are here led to consider our death as a change. The word is very impressive and full of meaning. It strongly intimates Job's belief in the immortality of the soul, and in a future state of existence. Were it not for this belief, he would have described death by some other name. He would have called it the end of his being, the termination of his existence. But he speaks of it only as a change; thus plainly intimating that he expected to live after death, though in a different manner.

But though death is not the extinction of our being, it is a change; a change so great and important, that perhaps no other figurative expression can be found, more strikingly descriptive of it. In the first place, it is the commencement of a great change in our bodies. To this Job alludes in the context; thou destroyest, says he, the hope of man; thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away. What this change is, I need not inform you. Suffice it to say, that so great is it in itself, so loathsome and shocking in its consequences, that it irresistably impels us, as it did Abraham, to bury the bodies of our deceased friends out of our sight, however dear they were to us while animated with life; a change, which may well occasion us to say, with Job, to corruption, thou art our father, and to the worm, thou art our mother and our sister. In a word, it is the fulfilment of the sentence, Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return. Look at the body while glowing with health and vigor; look at it again after the animating spirit has fled; look at it when it becomes food for worms; look at it when nothing but a little dust remains; and you will see what a change death occasions in this respect.

2. Death is the commencement of a great change in our mode of existence. Until death, our spirits are clothed with a body, but after death, they exist in a disembodied state, the state of separate spirits. Indeed, death essentially consists in the separation of the soul from the body. Did it produce no other change than this, it might well be called a great change. While in the body, our mode of existence resembles that of the irrational animals around us. Like them, we hunger, and thirst, and are weary; like them, we need daily supplies of food and rest to support life; and our existence, like theirs, is measured

by days and weeks, seasons and years. But after death, our mode of existence will resemble that of angels. We shall no more hunger, nor thirst, or be weary; we shall no more require food or sleep, nor will our existence be measured by the measures of time; for with us time will then have ended. We shall have entered on eternity, on that ocean which has no shore, landmarks, or divisions, to inform us how far we have proceeded. There, a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. This change in our mode of existence, will be accompanied by a corresponding change in our mode of perception. Here we perceive objects only through the medium of our senses. While in the body, our souls are like a man in prison, through the walls of which a few openings are made, to permit him to discern what passes without. But at death, the walls are thrown down, and the prisoner bursts forth into open day. Then we shall see without eyes, hear without ears, and feel without touch. So far as the nature of the objects which we shall then perceive requires it, the soul will probably be all eye, all ear, all feeling; and its perceptions will, of course, be incomparably more clear and distinct than they now are.

3. At death a great change will take place, not only in the mode, but in the objects of perception. We shall in effect experience a change of place. It is true that, in strictness of speech, spirits cannot be properly said to remove from one place to another, because place has relation to matter, and with matter, disembodied spirits have no connection. Still, as we have no method of designating place, but by referring to the objects which mark that place, and as at death we shall be introduced to an entirely new class of objects, it may without impropriety be said, that death occasions a change of place. At least, it removes us from one world to another. Our bodies, while they bind us to this world, separate us, like an interposing veil, from the world to come. But at death the veil will be rent. The stroke which separates our souls from our bodies, will separate us, at once and forever, from this world and all its perishable objects, and introduce us to a new world, and to new objects of perception. The world to which we shall then be introduced is spiritual and eternal; of course we shall there perceive nothing but spiritual and eternal objects. There will be no color, no sounds, no shapes, nothing that we can touch; yet every object

will appear incomparably more real, substantial and durable, than any of the objects which we now perceive. As we now perceive all material, so shall we then perceive all spiritual objects. Of course, we shall then most clearly, constantly and forever perceive God, the Father of spirits and of the spiritual world.

This is the first object which will burst upon the aching sight of the soul when it leaves the body. In a moment it will find itself in the presence of the great Sun of the universe, whose beams, like a torrent, pervade immensity and eternity. Sun, moon and stars will all have vanished. Earth and its objects will appear to have been suddenly annihilated, and God, God alone, will rush in upon the mind, and fill every faculty, occupy every thought. Above and below, behind and before, wherever the mind can turn itself, or whithersoever roam, it will still find itself in the immediate presence of God; nor, if I may so express it, can the eyelids of the soul ever close for an instant, to shut out the dazzling refulgence of his glory. As companions in admiring, or in shrinking with despair from these glories, the soul will perceive itself to be surrounded by myriads of created spirits, of opposite characters, and will quickly find, that the same God who, to holy spirits, is a refreshing, animating light, is, to the unholy, a consuming fire; that what is heaven to the one, is hell to the other.

4. At death a great change will take place in our employments, and in the mode of spending our existence. While we dwell in these frail, dependent bodies, they necessarily engross much of our attention, and much of our time; and a large proportion of our exertion is directed to the supply of their wants, the preservation of their health, and the promotion of their comfort. It is well if much time is not wasted in pampering and indulging them, in making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. In addition to this, another portion of our time and exertion is directed to the bodies of our dependants; to the wants and concerns of our relatives, and to the general interests of the community. But at death, all these employments will cease. We shall no longer have bodies to provide for, families to care for, or social and relative duties to perform; nor will any part of our existence, as much of it now is, be lost in sleep. Of course all our employments will be of a spiritual nature. We

shall be constantly engaged in thought, in reflection, in meditation, in the most intense exercise of feeling; and our feelings and meditations must of course be pleasant or painful, according to our characters. Here, our attention is diverted from ourselves by a thousand objects, so that after a long life, men often die ignorant of their own character. But there, our attention will be turned to ourselves. Then, if not before, we shall be made to know ourselves, and shall be our own constant companions. Here, we can fly from uneasy thoughts, from the reproaches of conscience, from guilty fears, to scenes of business and pleasure. But in the world to which death removes us, there will be no buying and selling, no planting or building, no places devoted to business or amusement, no possibility of escaping from ourselves for a single moment. What a change is this, to the thoughtless unreflecting part of mankind!

5. At death, a great change will take place in our state and situation. This world is a world of trial. While we remain in it, we are in a state of probation. Our days are days of grace. We enjoy seasons and offers of grace; we hear the gospel of grace, and are permitted and invited to approach the throne of grace. But at death, this state of trial and probation terminates, and we enter on an unchangeable state, a state of reward and retribution. Then the Sun of righteousness sets, the day of grace ends, the door of mercy is shut, and Christ exchanges, with respect to us, his character of Saviour, for that of Judge. Death, then, is not only a great change, but in a most important sense, our last change. Every thing in the other world is, like that world, unalterable. Death stamps our characters as he finds them, and sets upon them the seal of eternity, and while he fixes the seal, the unchangeable God exclaims, Let him that is unjust, be unjust still; and let him that is filthy be filthy still; and let him that is righteous be righteous still; and let him that is holy be holy still. But though death will thus stamp our characters and fix them unalterably, yet there is,

6. One sense in which it will produce in them a great change, a change however, not of kind but only of degree; a change not from bad to good, or from good to bad, but from good to better, and from bad to worse. While men remain in this world, there is a mixture of imperfection in the characters of the good,

for they are here renewed but in part; and on the contrary there are many appearances of goodness in the characters and conduct of the wicked. They may have kind relative and social affections, together with what are called amiable, natural dispositions. They may feel religious impressions, in a greater or less degree; and by the influence of a pious education, of conscience, of human laws, and of a regard to the opinions of others, they may be induced to live a moral and even apparently a religious life. But at death, all the imperfections which here mar the characters of the righteous, and all the fair appearances of goodness which adorn the characters of the wicked, will be forever removed. To him that hath, says our Saviour, shall more be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have. Then the graces of the Christian, which had previously been opposed, and fettered, and thwarted by various causes, connected with their situation in this world, will rise at once to the perfect standard of heaven; while the various passions and propensities of the wicked, which here only bud and blossom, will, in consequence of the removal of all restraint, bring forth their ripe but deadly fruit; so that while, from the death bed of a Christian there will rise up an angel, with an angelic song in his mouth, from the death bed of the sinner there will start up a fiend, with the blasphemies of hell bursting from his lips.

Hence we may add, lastly, that at death we shall experience a great change with respect to happiness and misery. We shall bid a final adieu to one or to the other; we shall feel in a higher degree one or the other, as soon as we leave the body. How great, how happy was the change which the beggar Lazarus experienced, when he was freed in a moment from his wounds, and from his wants, and carried by angels from the rich man's door to the mansions above. How great, how terrible was the change which the rich man suffered, when he was torn from his wealth, his habitation, his banquets and gay companions, and the next moment lifted up his eyes being in torments. Similar changes take place whenever the righteous and the wicked die. It is true that, even in this life, holiness tends to produce perfect happiness, and sin to occasion perfect misery. But with respect to both, the tendency is here opposed in various ways. The bodily infirmities and the outward trials and afflictions of the

righteous, their remaining sinfulness and ignorance, the prevalence of sin in the world around them, and anxiety for the salvation of their friends, cause them, while in this tabernacle, to groan being burdened. But from all these evils, death frees them in a moment. It removes them from all that they hate or fear. It brings them to all which they love or desire, and of course renders their happiness complete.

On the other hand, many causes conspire to prevent the wicked from being completely wretched, and even to give them something like happiness in the present life. They love this world, and in some degree they enjoy it. They find a sort of pleasure in the gratification of their appetites and passions; in the success of their enterprises; in the accumulation of property, and in the society of their sinful companions; and they contrive, in various ways, to avoid those things which would disturb their false peace. They can without much difficulty banish reflection, quiet their consciences, and maintain a delusive hope that all will be well with them at last. But at death, all these sources of enjoyment will be dried up. They will be torn from all that they loved, deprived of every gratification, and separated from all their present pursuits and employments. Their false hope will be succeeded by despair; conscience will become a wakeful, immortal worm to gnaw them forever; a distinct and vivid recollection of their sinfulness, folly and madness will fill them with agonies of shame and remorse, while the constant sight of that infinite, eternal Being whom they have disobeyed and slighted, together with the sense of his anger, will scorch and blast them like a consuming fire. Such is the change which takes place at death.

II. There is an appointed time allotted to each of us on earth, at the expiration of which the change will take place.

This is a truth which our text plainly intimates, and which is fully confirmed by other passages of revelation. We are told that the number of our months is with God; that he sets us bounds which we cannot pass; that man has a day which he must accomplish; that our times are in God's hand, and that he has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of our habitation. Indeed, we must allow that God has set to every man an appointed time, or deny the providential government of the universe. For when we consider the impor-

tant influence which the continuance or termination of a life often has over the concerns, not only of individuals but even of nations, we cannot fail to perceive, that if we take such an event out of God's hands and counsels, we do in effect deprive him of the government of the world, and reduce him to the condition of a mere spectator. Indeed, had he not given men an appointed time on earth, he could not foresee and predict as he often has done, the day and hour of their death. Man then has an appointed time to continue on earth, at the expiration of which the change of which we are speaking will take place. This leads us to inquire,

III. What is implied in waiting all the days of our appointed time. This evidently implies,

1. Waiting till God shall see fit to release us, without voluntarily hastening our death, either in a direct or indirect manner. There have been frequent instances in which persons who were weary of life, but who did not choose to die by their own hands, have thrown themselves in the way of danger, or exposed themselves to infectious disorders, or refused, when ill, to use any means for their recovery, with a view to hasten the approach of death. For all these indirect methods of suicide, as well as to direct acts of violence upon our own lives, the resolution in our text is evidently opposed; and since it is not lawful to wish for what it is not lawful to attempt, it is equally opposed to all impatient, passionate wishes, that death would hasten his approach. Waiting all the days of our appointed time for this change, implies,

2. An habitual expectation of it. No man can be said to wait for an event which he does not expect, nor can we be properly said to wait all our days for death, unless we live in habitual expectation of it. This expectation must be sufficiently strong to influence our conduct, to make us live in some measure as frail, dying creatures, who have such a change before them, ought to live; to induce us, in the words of the apostle, to weep as though we wept not, to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, to buy as though we possessed not, and to use the world as not abusing it; knowing that our time is short, and that the fashion of this world passeth away. He, who, instead of this, seldom thinks of, and perhaps never realizes his mortality, who lives as if he expected to live here forever; who weeps

for worldly afflictions, as if he had lost his all; who rejoices in temporal prosperity, as if it were eternal; who buys and grasps worldly objects, as if he were never to lose them; can with no shadow of propriety, be said to wait till his change shall come.

3. Waiting for this great change implies habitual care to preserve and maintain such a frame of mind, as we should wish to be in when it arrives. This I presume none will deny. A man who is waiting for the arrival of any person, or for the occurrence of any event, always takes care to be ready and prepared for it.

Much more, then, may it be expected that he who is waiting for such a change as we have been describing, a change which can take place but once, and which in its consequences is to last forever, will take measures to prepare for it; to acquire and maintain such a state of mind as he would wish to be found in at its arrival. Whatever preparation is necessary he will take care to make. Whatever work is to be performed, he will be careful to have done; or at least to have it in such a state that he can, at any moment, if called, give it up into his master's hands, without incurring the charge of indolence or unfaithfulness.

But what, it may be asked, does all this imply? What is the necessary preparation, what is the frame we ought to be in at death? My friends, let your own reason answer, and if reason is at a loss, let revelation assist her.

It is abundantly evident from what has been said of this change, what preparation is necessary for it, what frame of mind we ought to cultivate. If at death our bodies are to return to their dust, then our bodies ought evidently not to engage all our attention. If we are at death to be removed from this world to another, then we ought to think more of that world than of this. We ought to obtain all the information respecting it which is in our power; we ought not to lay up all our treasure, nor even the chief part of our treasure here, but if possible to lay up treasure and secure friends, in the world to which we are hastening; and where we are to live forever. If we are at death to leave all worldly employments, and to spend our time, or rather our eternity, in spiritual employments, with spiritual objects; we ought to acquire a relish for such objects and employments.

We ought to be able to spend time happily in solitude, in religious contemplations, in prayer and praise; for if we cannot spend a day, or even an hour, happily, in these employments on earth, how can we spend a happy eternity in them, beyond the grave? Above all, if at death we go into the immediate presence of God, and if that presence will be a source of infinite, eternal happiness or misery to us, according to our characters, we ought to acquire that character with which God is pleased, the character of a penitent believer in Christ; a character in which that holiness which is the essence of God's moral perfections, decidedly predominates. In a word, we must, like the apostle, count all things else as loss, that we may win Christ, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is of God by faith, looking and waiting for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. In this way alone, can we obtain the pardon of our sins and the favor of God; in this way alone become meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

He who has made this preparation, he who has lived like a pilgrim and stranger here on earth, looking not at things seen and temporal, but at things unseen and eternal, whose treasure and whose heart is in heaven, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and who is daily uttering the language, anticipating the employments, singing the songs, and breathing the spirit of heaven; he is in the proper frame, the very frame in which every truly wise man would wish to be found when death comes.

Lastly. Waiting for our change may be justly considered as implying some degree of desire for it. This desire will not of course be impatient, or prompt a wish to control the will, or alter the purpose of God respecting us.

Still, he who is waiting for such a change as the Christian will experience at death, cannot but wait with some degree of desire. His treasure is in heaven. How can he but desire to possess it? His heart is in heaven. How can he but desire to be where his heart is? His nearest friends and relatives are in heaven, friends and relatives to whom he is bound by everlasting bonds. How can he but desire to join them? Perfect freedom from all the evils which now afflict, perfect holiness and happiness await him in heaven. How can he but

desire to possess them? Above all, his God and Saviour, he of whom he can say, whom have I in heaven but thee, and what is there on earth which I desire beside thee? this God, this Saviour is in heaven; and how can he but desire to be with them? He will, he must desire it, but he will desire it patiently, submissively. If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Having thus shown what is implied in waiting for our change, I will state some reasons, why we should wait for it in this manner.

1. As a reason why we should so far wait for our change, as not to desire it impatiently, or hasten it by violence, I shall only mention one passage of Scripture. Wo unto you that desire the day of the Lord, to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is as darkness, and not light. As if a man fled from a bear, and a lion met him; or as if he fled into the house, and leaned upon the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness and not light, even very dark and no brightness in it? I need not tell you that by the day of the Lord, is here meant the day of death. Let this passage be a warning, should you ever be tempted to hasten its approach.

As a motive which should induce us to wait for this change in the manner above described, I would mention,

2. The perfect reasonableness of so doing. It is reasonable that we should wait for death on account of its certainty and importance. It is reasonable that we wait habitually and constantly for it, because it may come at any moment. It is reasonable that we should wait all the days of our appointed time, for if we fail in this respect, if we are not found waiting when death comes, we lose all. It is only those who endure to the end that will be saved. It is only to him who is faithful unto death, that Christ promises a crown of life. So perfectly reasonable indeed is this duty that I shall add but one more reason for performing it, viz:

3. The command of Christ, with its attending promises and threatenings. Stand, says he, with your loins girt about, and your lamps trimmed. Be ye like servants who wait for their Lord, that when he cometh ye may open to him immediately: for ye know not at what hour the Son of man cometh. Blessed is that servant whom he shall find so doing.

My brethren, through the great change we have been considering, you must all pass. Your bodies must be changed. In a few years, of all the bodies which now fill this house, nothing but a few handsfull of dust will remain. Your mode of existence will be changed. Some disembodied, but still living spirits, will pass into a new and untried state of being. Your place of residence will be changed. The places which now know you will soon know you no more. Another assembly will fill this house. Other inhabitants will dwell in your habitations. Other names will glitter over the marts of business, and yours will be transferred to the tombstone. And when this world has lost you, another will have received you. After you are dead and forgotten here, you will be alive, and capable of exquisite happiness or misery elsewhere. After you are removed from all the objects which now affect you, a new world, new objects, new beings will rise upon you, and affect you in a manner far more powerful than you are or can be now affected. Above all, when this world and all that it contains sink from your view, God, that Being of whom you have heard so much, and perhaps thought so little, that being who formed and now invisibly surrounds and upholds you, will burst in upon and fill your mind, fill it with delight inconceivable, or agony unutterable, according to the state of your moral character. And as it affects you the moment after death, so it will continue to affect you forever; for neither his character nor yours will ever change. Long after all remembrance of you shall have been blotted from the earth, during all the remaining centuries which the sun may measure out to succeeding generations of mortals, you will still be bathing with delight, or writhing in agony, in the beams of Jehovah's presence. And even after this world shall have ceased to exist, when sun and stars are quenched in endless night, you will still continue the same individual, conscious being that you now are, and will still bear, and through eternity will continue to bear, that stamp of moral character with all its consequences, in which you are found, and in which you will be unchangeably fixed by death.

Choose, then, now, my hearers, what you will be; for now you have an opportunity. And in making a choice, remember that it is for eternity. Remember, too, that the temper, the employments, the associates which you choose on earth, you

choose forever. Say, then, what shall be your employment on earth? Shall it be spiritual and heavenly, or sinful and earthly? Shall it consist in the service of God, or of sin? Who shall be your associates on earth? shall they consist of the servants or of the neglecters of Christ? What shall be your temper and spirit on earth? Shall it be the spirit of the world, or the spirit that is of God? In a word, what will you be through eternity? A spirit of light, or a fiend of darkness?

If you hesitate in your choice, pause a moment, and look back to those who have passed through the great change before you. Think of the patriarchs who died before the flood. They have been perfectly happy for more than four thousand years, yet their happiness has but just commenced. Think of the sinners who died before the flood. For more than four thousand years they have been completely wretched, and yet their misery has but just commenced. So, my hearers, there will come a time when you will have been happy or miserable for four thousand, or four times four thousand years, and yet your heaven or your hell will be but beginning. Who then can pretend to describe or conceive the greatness, the importance of the change which is before you, or the consequence of the choice which you have to make?

If you make the choice, and adopt the resolution of Job, and wait all the days of your appointed time, till your change come, that change will be a happy one, and you will be able at Christ's second coming to say, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

But if you make a different choice, if you compel Christ still to say of you, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; your change will be unutterably dreadful. Fear will come upon you as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind; then you will call on God but he will not answer; you will seek him early, yet you shall not find him.